



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

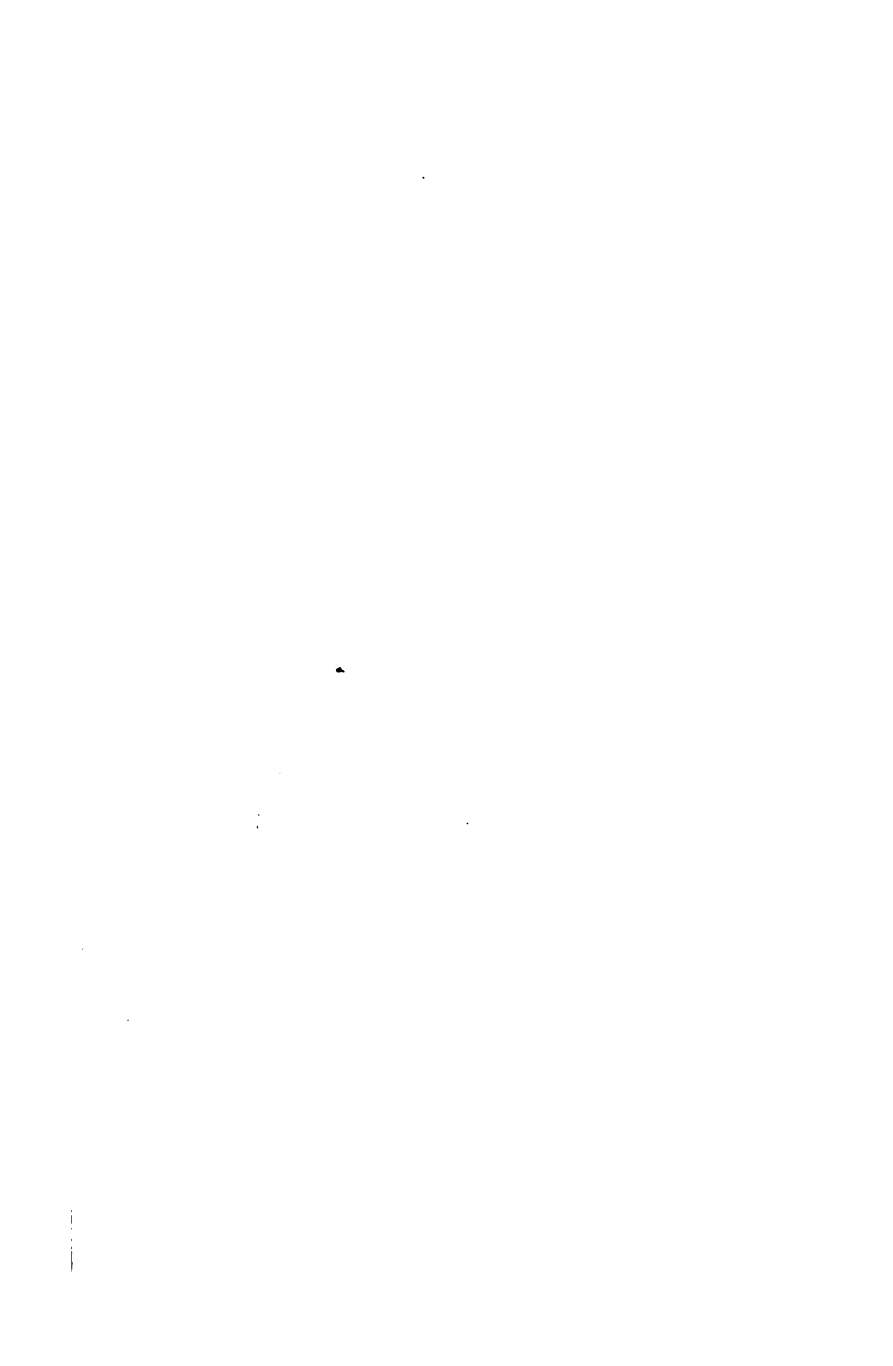
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

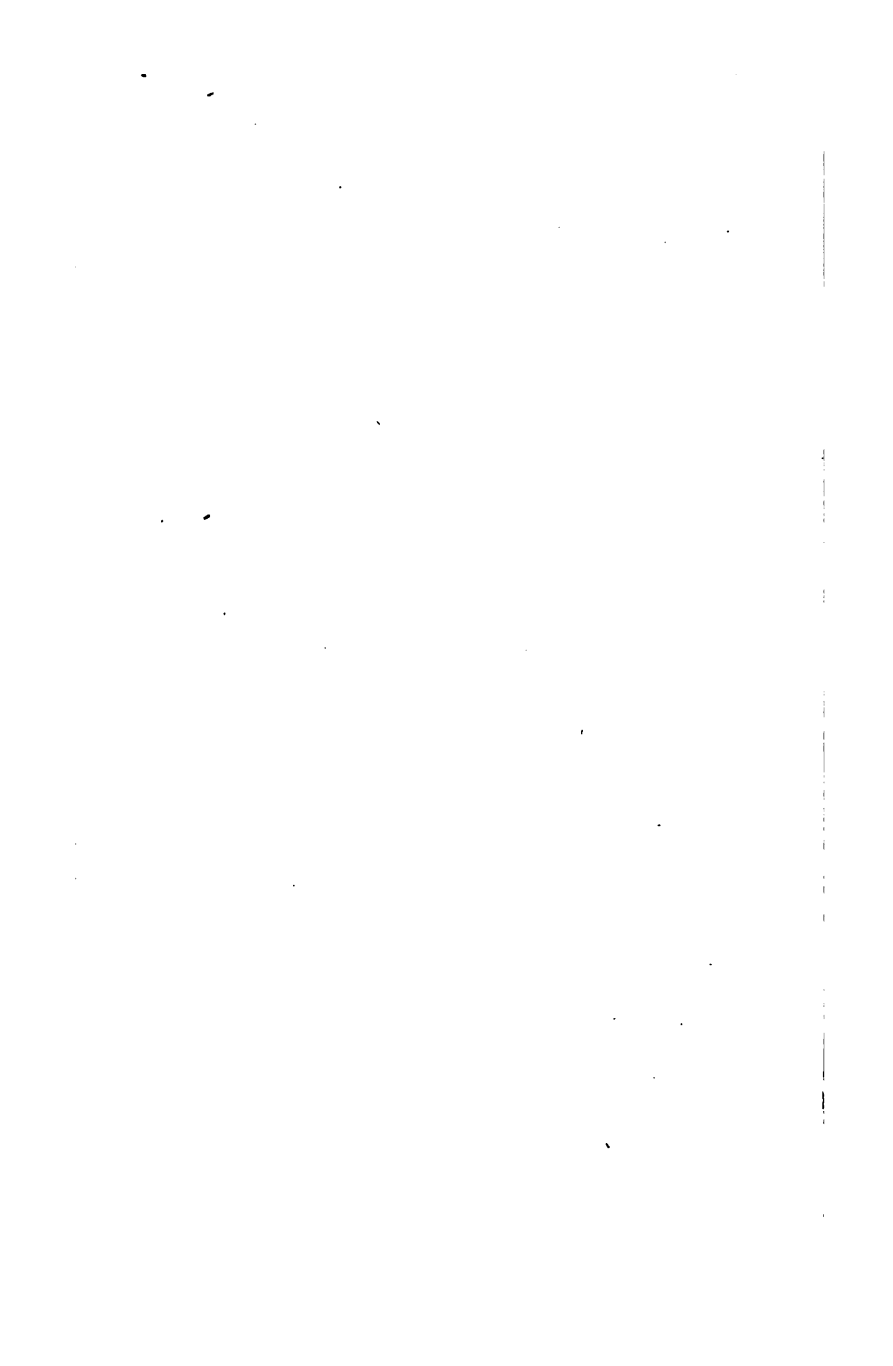




600069167Z







PASSAGES

IN THE

LIFE OF GILBERT ARNOLD.

PASSAGES
IN THE
LIFE OF GILBERT ARNOLD;

OR,

The Tale of the Four Sermons.

BY SULLIVAN EARLE.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1852.

249. u. 457.



DEDICATION.

TO

THE REV. HENRY HUTTON,

RECTOR OF

ST. PAUL'S, COVENT GARDEN,

THIS LITTLE STORY

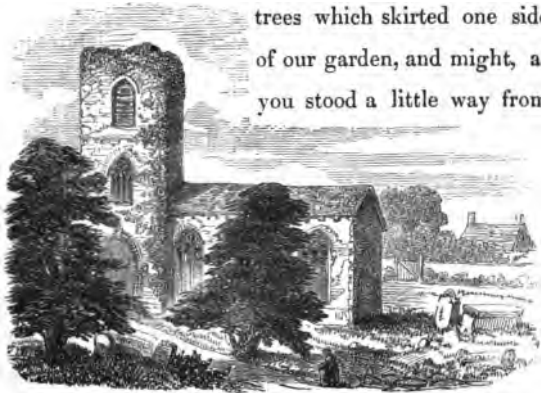
IS INSCRIBED.

THE FOUR SERMONS.

SERMON THE FIRST.

THE Church of Little Millbrook was close to my father's grounds. The grey tower rose above the

trees which skirted one side of our garden, and might, as you stood a little way from



the house, almost have been taken for a part of the same pile of buildings. I believe that it had originally stood in the park, with a clear space between it and the mansion, having been erected very many years ago by one of the ancient proprietors of the estate. Freshford had been a place of some note in the county for two or three centuries at least. The house had been added to, and rebuilt in parts; but a portion of the original edifice remained, and, as frequently does *not* happen in such cases, the restorations and additions were in tolerable harmony with the remains of the ancient structure. It was a long stone-fronted building, of very simple architecture, but well proportioned and picturesque, standing on the verge of a hill, dotted with groups of giant elms, and sloping gently down towards a clear, fresh, shallow stream, with just a few deep pools here and there for the lazy old trout to sleep in. The village of Millbrook was on the other side of the churchyard—a churchyard into which we stepped through a gate from our own garden, and which, on the village side, was approached by another, which

had never borne the restraint of a lock;—a quiet country churchyard, with some very old tombs in it—one or two of quaint device—and some grand, solemn yew-trees, even older than the tombs—a churchyard into which a chance traveller would be surely tempted to wander, and from which, if excluded by sexton's keys, he would as surely depart, flinging a hearty curse at the grudging customs of the country.

A little way from the church there was an open space, called the *Green*; and, save a few brown patches worn there by much cricketing, very green it was too at all seasons of the year. There were a few cottages around it, and in one corner you might see the Rectory-gates. The parsonage was a quiet, unpretending building—picturesque, with an air of comfort about it, and really more space in the interior than its outside show gave promise of possessing. There are many such in all parts of the country. There is an air of peace and happiness about them, and yet, Heaven knows, that if the strife be absent,

the misery is not; and the Millbrook Rectory was no exception to the rule.

I may as well stop, for a little time, at the Rectory-gates, whilst I say a few words about the inmates of that retired country parsonage. Of the good rector himself I write, as I ever felt towards him, with the profoundest reverence and the warmest affection. He was a man of threescore years, with silvery hair, and an apostolic sweetness of expression on his venerable face. But sadder still than sweet was that expression, and you saw at once that much suffering had touched the good man's heart. It had touched his heart—it had bowed his frame—it had broken his health; but it had elevated his nature. We are none of us worth much until we have suffered much. Mr. Arnold's trials had been great. The antecedents of his life had been laden with much sorrow. But his sorrows were not at an end. They were still around him; they still met him face to face every hour of the day; and it seemed, for his strength was visibly declining, that they would go down with him to the grave.

He had been some years rector of Little Millbrook. It was but a sorry living, and Mr. Arnold was fain to increase his means, not for his own sake, but for the sake of those around him—for he gave much to the poor—by receiving into his house a few private pupils. He had once held a better living, in another county; but, greatly attached as he was to his flock, he had deemed it right to carry his crook to another pasturage. It happened in this wise. The great landed proprietor of the parish, whose cure was confided to Mr. Arnold, was a harsh, ungenerous man, who dealt hardly by his tenants. The many acts of injustice which were done to his poorer parishioners often brought the “reverend champion” into collision with the great man. In the armour of a good conscience, fearless of consequences, and eager to proclaim the truth, Mr. Arnold had more than once privately pointed out, in forcible language to the squire, the duties and responsibilities of the rich, and the danger, as the wickedness, of oppressing the poor. His advocacy did his parishioners no good, and brought down enmity upon himself. Again and

again, but to no good purpose, did the rector of that parish all that was to be done in private, to impress upon the rich man a sense of his duty to his poorer brethren. Private efforts were of no avail. An act of unparalleled harshness, which suddenly rendered several poor families houseless and resourceless in the month of December, forced upon Mr. Arnold the conviction that it was his duty now to try a different course. It had always been his wont, more or less, to adapt his public preaching to parochial circumstances; and in this lay the secret of the interest he awakened, the success he accomplished, among his hearers; and now he determined, from the pulpit of the parish church, to denounce the oppressions of the aristocrat, and to exhort the sufferers to trust, patiently and hopefully, in God. Choosing for his text the opening words of the 57th Psalm, "Be merciful unto me, O God! be merciful unto me; for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge until these calamities be overpast;" and referring, at the commencement of his discourse, to the more correct and emphatic

version of the Prayer-Book, "Until this *tyranny* be overpast," he preached a sermon, which, though little more in words than an exhortation to patience and thankfulness, under every dispensation of Providence and every wrong-doing of man, was too applicable to recent events to be misunderstood by his congregation. The squire was there, and with him, in the high, well-curtained pew, a distinguished guest, a member of the government. There was much turning of eyes towards that pew, and much uneasy moving within. The truth came out before the great official functionary—a humane, large-minded man—in whose eyes the squire wished to be of good account; and the feud between the rector and the landed proprietor from that time became, on the part at least of the latter, irreconcilable.

"Feuds of this kind," wrote Addison in his inimitable picture of Sir Roger de Coverley, "though too frequent in the country, are very fatal to the ordinary people, who are so used to be dazzled with riches, that they pay as much deference to the understanding of a man of an estate as a man of learning." Recogn-

nising this truth, Mr. Arnold, after much thought and much conflict with himself, determined to withdraw from the unseemly struggle. With little or no prospect of advancement elsewhere, he hinted to the bishop, under whose patronage he held the living, his desire to be relieved ; and before long a successor was appointed. There was much in all this that distressed him more than the loss of fortune, for he was interested in the parish, which he had done much to improve, and it grieved him to leave his flock to the care of a stranger. But he turned his back upon the parsonage in which his wife had died, and the quiet churchyard in which she was resting, with abundant faith in the goodness of God. And God had raised him up a friend in an unexpected quarter. There was one among his hearers on that memorable Sunday, who listened with admiration to his discourse, and that one sate in a corner of the squire's high-curtained pew. It was the great man's great friend, who, struck by the dignity of Mr. Arnold's manner, the solemnity of his utterance, the forcible simplicity and yet the scholarly elegance of his diction, and appre-

hending, after a while, the application of his discourse, bore that day's lesson in remembrance, and interested himself to procure his subsequent advancement. The living of Little Millbrook fell vacant. It was in the gift of the proprietor of Freshford, who was nearly connected with the minister; and, without much difficulty, it was obtained for Mr. Arnold. The good man's family then consisted of two children: a girl, some fourteen years of age, and a boy about two years younger. They were very soon located in the new parsonage; and although much subdued by his bereavement—for he had loved his wife with the tenderest affection—in the many duties of a parish that had been much neglected, and in the abiding conviction that the cherished partner of his younger days had been translated to a happier abode, he found consolation and serenity of mind. But the worst trials of his life were yet to come upon him. His daughter Lucy, who united in one loveable whole all the sweetness of her mother's nature, and all the wisdom, the bravery, the activity in well-doing of her remaining parent, seemed touched—one could not

then say "stricken"—by the same remorseless disease which, in the very spring of her life, had sent Mrs. Arnold to dwell among the angels. The gentlest, sweetest, kindest, wisest creature at the age of seventeen that ever budded into womanhood was Lucy Arnold, when consumption laid its cold hand upon her cheek. Slight at first were the signs; but unmistakeable—slight at first, but month after month, harsher and harsher grew the lines in which that sad story was written, until months swelled into years, and Lucy seemed to walk tottering upon the margin of the grave. So it was on that December morning which I have made the starting-point of this little story. Miss Arnold was still in the parsonage-house; but a week—a day—and no surprise should I have felt to learn that she was in heaven.

Bitter was this cup—heavy this burden—Mr. Arnold loved her so. But there was a cup more bitter, a burden more heavy—as the good man's portion in life. In his beloved daughter, fading away before his eyes, he saw one meet to be the companion of angels, about to receive her reward before her time,

In his assured belief of this there was a sustaining consolation which nothing could overshadow. But, oh! how different the feelings with which he contemplated the career of Gilbert Arnold, his son. He had watched over that boy with the tenderest solicitude—he had prayed for him the fervent prayers of the righteous man; but his prayers had not yet been answered. It had been Mr. Arnold's hard lot to see the engaging, merry, quick, bright-faced, supple-limbed child—so full of all infantine grace, and so beloved for all his graces—sink into the hard, selfish, unprincipled, unloveable boy. It was a mystery to Mr. Arnold; but his faith abated not a jot. Every year he saw some bad quality developing itself in that beloved child; every week, every day, he was pained by the knowledge of some bad action—of something base, selfish, or wicked, for the mere love of wickedness, done by young Gilbert Arnold. But still the righteous man prayed fervently; still his faith was not overcast.

Home-education was not successful. All that paternal kindness could do; all that the gentlest wis-

dom, the blended firmness and mildness which was so conspicuous a feature in Mr. Arnold's character ; all that the most watchful indulgence, all that the most-considered removal of the incentives and inducements to error could do, was done by the afflicted father ; but everything was done in vain. Still the righteous man prayed fervently—still his faith was not over-cast.

He then tried another course. Thinking that society—that emulation—might do something ; that in a community of boys—a community in which, though daring irregularities find favour and invite respect, for the mean, the sordid, the despicable, there is no sort of toleration, Gilbert Arnold might be shamed out of his worst vices, his father sent him to school. But at school he lied, he stole, he sneaked ; he bullied the younger boys, cringed to the elder, but secretly revenged every blow and every kick that was bestowed upon him, by inflicting some untraceable injury upon his stronger foes. He poured ink, on dark winter evenings, through the crevices of their desks. He rubbed out, when opportunity offered,

elaborate sums or exercises upon the slates of the bigger boys; he "sprung" their cricket-bats; he cut holes in their hats; and, at last, after receiving a decent hiding for savagely kicking a little boy, he betrayed a plot into which some of the seniors had entered for "shirking out" into the town after night-fall, by writing in formal printed characters a letter to the head-master.

The plot was discovered. The conspirators were detected one fine moonlight night, between twelve and one o'clock, sauntering round the cathedral-close of Salisbury with cigars in their mouths. There the doctor confronted them; pleasantly observed it was a fine night, and that the grand old cathedral looked charmingly, bathed in the light of the full moon; then walked the young gentlemen quietly home again, saw them to bed, and wished them good night. Next morning he called the delinquents up to his desk, showed them the anonymous letter he had received, and asked them if they knew the writer. They undertook to find him out, and the document was placed in the hand of the senior boy. "It is very

wrong of you," said the doctor, "to commit such pranks as this; but I hate and detest a sneak." Gilbert Arnold heard all this, turned pale, and trembled in his shoes. A boy sitting opposite to him, seeing his change of countenance, was not slow to report the fact. There was an investigation after school hours. It was seen that the paper, on which the letter was written, corresponded exactly—it had the same watermark, and the same stationer's name—with the remains of a quire found in young Arnold's desk; and to remove all doubts upon the subject, a seal was found in his waistcoat pocket—for the schoolboy-police searched him—which corresponded with the seal on the letter. There was a brief, formal trial in the school-room. A jury of a dozen boys of his own standing unhesitatingly declared him guilty. The circumstantial evidence, and the verdict passed by the boys, were reported at once to the doctor; and Gilbert Arnold was expelled. It went to the master's heart to do it, for he greatly respected, as did all the surrounding clergy, the good rector of Little Millbrook; but there was no alternative; he

“hated and detested,” as he said, “a sneak;” he could forgive almost any offence, of an open kind, against himself, whom he good-humouredly described as a “common enemy,” but an act of black treachery, committed by a boy against his schoolfellows, he could not bring himself to overlook. So Gilbert went back to Little Millbrook—cast out, disgraced—a black sheep, ejected by the flock, and abandoned by the shepherd. But still the righteous man prayed fervently—still his faith was not overcast.

It was about this time—partly, indeed, owing to this circumstance—that Mr. Arnold, who had been for some time contemplating the step, determined to exert himself to obtain a few private pupils. The savings of his former benefice were spent, and he found that the revenues of Little Millbrook, after all his household expenses were paid, were not sufficient to enable him to give to the poor, or to keep up the insurances which he had effected on his life. What he resolved to do was soon done. His character was greatly respected in the neighbourhood, and he had no small reputation as a scholar. There was not a man, from one ex-

tremity of the island to another, to whom a parent might more safely have entrusted the education of a child. The few pupils were soon found, and I was one of them. There was a new chance of reformation thus afforded to Gilbert Arnold. It was possible that a system, combining in some measure the advantages of household with public education—the constant superintendence of the parental eye, and yet the companionship of class-fellows—might be attended with better results. Mr. Arnold implored a blessing on the scheme; and his son took his place among his pupils. There was no sort of improvement. Gilbert was always in mischief—always committing some offence, and endeavouring to shift the guilt upon the shoulders of his companions. As for myself, it was not long before I detected him in an attempt to lie away my reputation. I warned him of the consequences of a second effort in the same direction, but it was made not long after the first. We were about the same age, and the same height. I struck him, and we fought. We were separated—just, I believe, as young Arnold was about to declare that he had had enough

of it ; and the story told to his father was, of course, a big lie, to my discredit. To do the good pastor justice, he did not believe the word of his son before that of a stranger. This was but one of many instances which told too plainly that the private-pupil system, though it might recruit his purse, was not likely to reform his son. But still the righteous man prayed fervently ; still his faith was not overcast.

About the same time that I went to college, Gilbert Arnold was articled to a lawyer in London. It seemed a dangerous experiment ; but the lawyer was Gilbert's uncle ; he was a stern man, reputed rich, and without children ; and there was a hope that a strong sense of self-interest might induce the youth to set some restraint upon his impulses and desires. But it did not. The temptations of London life were too great for him. He became idle and dissipated. Many and many a letter reached the Rectory, which struck sorrow into the hearts of the good pastor and his gentle daughter, who was slowly fading away to her rest. They were letters of complaint from his brother, or importunate solicitations for money from his son ; and

soon it became a day of mourning at the Rectory when the handwriting of either was seen upon the breakfast-table. It was very hard ; but Mr. Arnold did not complain. It was a great mystery ; but Mr. Arnold did not doubt. Often and often, when he thought of the unbridled career of his son, and looked upon the pale cheek and wasted form of his daughter, knowing how he had prayed for them both, and how his prayers had been unanswered, it seemed to him all very strange and perplexing ; but he prayed on, saying to himself, " All these things are against me ; but who knows that God, who at various times and after divers manners answers the prayers of his servants, may not give heed to them yet. His ways are not our ways. He sends an answer to our prayers when we expect it not—and *as* we expect it not." So, still as bad tidings came to the Rectory from without—still as there was fear and sorrow within, the righteous man prayed fervently, and his faith was not overcast.

And thus were matters at the Rectory, when on that December morning I set out on a visit to Mr. and Miss Arnold. I knew he would be anxious to

see me—anxious for a report of the successes achieved at my college examination, and it was no small pleasure to me to feel that the result had been creditable to myself and to my worthy tutor. No one ever took such deep interest in the after-careers of his pupils as the good rector of Little Millbrook. And amidst so much that is thankless and unrequiting in the office of the tutor—amidst so much that is dreary and disheartening in the drudgery of tuition—who can say that there are not little compensating snatches of light and luxury peculiar to his lot, that go far to reduce the heavy balance against him, in the profit and loss account of pleasure and pain? Mere success is not enough. Success is often very ungrateful. It would not be so unjust a world as it is, if we thought a little more of what we owe to those who are so often the architects of our fortune.

I found Mr. Arnold sitting in his study. The two or three pupils then on his list had just left him for the winter vacation. The room was the very perfection of a study. There was a grave and learned air about it; but one wondrously attractive and sub-

duing. The well-stored bookcases covering the entire surface of the walls ; the busts, on one side, of Homer, Socrates, and Cicero ; on the other, of Bacon, Milton, and Locke, that kept guard over these printed treasures ; the globes in the corners of the room ; the capacious portfolio-rack ; the many-leaved screen before the door—no common screen, but one in a perennial flush of communicativeness, dressed out in maps, and chronologies, and statistics ; the spacious



tables, one for writing, the other for reading at, with no lack of inkstands, and paperweights, and paperknives upon them, ever ready to the hand of the student ; all these, and other things, were there, so arranged as to make one most attractive whole. Learning seemed to be made easy in that room. There was an irresistible fascination in it—a spell, as it were, that seemed to make all who entered it students in spite of themselves. You could hardly leave it, after a brief sojourn, no wiser than when you entered. Knowledge seemed to come upon you un-

awares. I attributed not a little of my own success to that room—or rather, to the *savoir faire* of Mr. Arnold, who imparted to learning an attractiveness—he did it upon system—which it was not endowed with elsewhere. Nothing was dry in that room. Even political economy flourished there, fresh and exhilarating, and mathematics seemed to yield its own especial crop of flowers.

The good man's eyes glistened, for a moment, as I told him of my success. He was sitting at the writing-table when I entered, with some account-books open before him. I thought that there was an expression on his face of even more than his wonted dejection. His voice trembled, too, as he welcomed me. It was easy to perceive that he had recently been much agitated, for he was wontedly so very calm. It was not long before I knew the secret of his perturbation. Gilbert Arnold had come down unexpectedly to Millbrook late on the preceding evening. There seemed to be an irreconcilable feud between him and his uncle. He was deeply in debt, and he wanted money. When I entered, Mr. Arnold was casting up accounts, and

consulting his bank-book to ascertain what amount of assistance he could give to his son.

"I wanted something to cheer me," he said—"some good tidings of one of my children;"—he always spoke of us as his children;—"and now I have more to be thankful for than I ever ventured to expect. You have done very well, Sullivan."

"I owe it all to you, sir," I said.

"To God and your own industry rather," returned the good rector.

We talked a little about college matters—my past career—my future prospects. But it was plain that his mind was wandering away from halls, and chapels, and examinations, and treading scenes more nearly at home. He soon broke off abruptly from his academical inquiries, and asked me if I had seen Gilbert?

My answer was in the negative. I did not then even know that he was at Millbrook.

There was then a brief pause. Twice the good man's lips began to move, and twice he seemed to check the utterance of an obtrusive thought. At last he said to me, "Sullivan!"

I did not answer. I knew the sorrow that was rooted in his heart, and I looked the sympathy that was in my own.

He took courage and went on, but in a broken voice—"Sullivan, I have ever regarded you almost as a son; I have loved you, indeed, with the affection of a father, and you have returned to me the reverence that is due to one. I feel as though I could say anything to you. You know what are the shadows that brood over my whole life, and darken the doors of this quiet homestead; but you do not know in what shape the black clouds have last gathered above me. This is more terrible than all."

Another pause—Mr. Arnold bowed his head as though in prayer, and then resumed:—"I have had, you know, much to suffer—Gilbert's irregularities—his extravagance—the seeming hopelessness of reformation—his uncle's letters ever reporting him more and more reckless. It is strange indeed that so stern a man should have borne with him so long. But now his endurance—his forbearance are at an end. Gilbert's last crime has broken down utterly the great

wall of his uncle's toleration. He can never go back again to that house."

He seemed now to have braced himself up in a mighty effort to tell me the whole story of his son's humiliation. He had, as it soon appeared, a great object to gain. I partly divined the truth, for I had heard somewhat obscurely from my father's game-keeper a story that was afloat in the village. Mr. Arnold soon set my doubts at rest by asking me if I knew that Jessie Hart had returned home?

I said that I had heard something of the kind.

Now Jessie Hart was a very pretty girl—the daughter of a poor widow in Millbrook. Her father had been the parish-clerk; but he had been dead for some three or four years, and had left a large family behind him, of which Jessie was the eldest. Mrs. Hart was an industrious, well-conducted woman, and on her father's death, Mr. Arnold and a few neighbours, by advancing her a little money, which was afterwards punctually repaid, had assisted her to establish a small shop in the village, from the proceeds of which she was enabled to clothe and feed her father-

less children, and to give them a little "schooling." Jessie grew up to be a very sweet and loveable girl. She was a great favourite with Miss Arnold and with the good rector. She was very often at their house. It was part of their system to encourage the young village girls to come to the parsonage. Miss Arnold lent them books to read, gave them needlework to do—often had a little sewing class in her own room—one of the girls reading aloud to the others as they plied their needles under the young lady's eye. Before the advent of the Arnolds, the parish had been much neglected. The previous incumbent had been a rich man, who might have done great things for the poor. But having the power, he had not the will. He drove through the village sometimes in his high, double-bodied, well-horsed phaeton, from which his liveried servant pompously descended to deliver a message at the clerk's door; but the poor people said of him that he never entered their cottages even to ask if they had a Bible on their shelves. And so it happened that the old had become careless and negligent, and the young had grown up ignorant and immoral. When Mr.

Arnold first took up his abode in the Millbrook parsonage, there was no such thing as shame known in the village. I mean that shameful things were done without any sense of shame. Young girls talked of the degradation of their companions without a word of either rebuke or pity. They wandered about idle and reckless, with something almost defiant in their manner, as though they were going in search of ruin—eager to be destroyed. They had no kind of self-respect. It was more their misfortune than their fault, poor things! Nobody seemed to care for them; and so they did not care for themselves. They were, indeed, cast-aways before they had done wrong.

All this Mr. Arnold set himself strenuously to reform. It was pitiable to see the threatening manner of young and attractive girls, just budding into womanhood—pitiable to hear the looseness of their conversation. They had no friends among people of better feeling and higher principle—they had none to offer them wise counsel, and set before them pure example. It seemed so easy to save them, that it was miserable to think that no one would take the trouble. Mr.

Arnold believed that far more serviceable than all pulpit-preaching would be such kindly intercourse with the poor, as would sow deep in their hearts the conviction that they were cared for by people higher and holier than themselves. He strove to encourage an inward sense of their own dignity and importance, and to induce them to consider that there were earthly friends to whom they were bound, by ties of almost parental gratitude, to render an account of themselves. At all events, he let them know that he was watching over them—that their sorrow would be his sorrow, and their shame his shame. In this good work his gentle daughter was a willing and an influential associate. Miss Arnold knew how much might be done by womanly kindness and womanly example to raise the condition and the character of her neglected sisterhood; and frail as was her body, she threw her heart and soul, with strength and eagerness, into the good cause. It was a work, however, which was not to be done at once. The great jungle of that neglected parish was not to be suddenly reduced into a well-trimmed garden. But the improvement was some-

thing visible and substantial. It took shape under their hands. They knew that they were not working in vain.

Miss Arnold delighted, as I have said, to bring the young girls to the parsonage, and to associate constantly with them. Knowing how true it is that Satan ever "finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," she exerted herself to keep the hands of the Millbrook girls constantly employed. She found them, in respect of needlework, mere bunglers. They spoilt almost everything that was put into their hands. Such puckering and botching Lucy Arnold had never seen before. All this was soon amended and reformed. A very little teaching—such pleasant teaching as was current at the parsonage—soon raised the standard of needlework throughout the parish. And in a little while the Millbrook girls were eagerly sought after as serving-maidens, because they were known to be the best sempstresses in the county.

Mr. Arnold knew the temptations of domestic service. He knew that "good places" are often very bad places. He knew that many dangers beset the

paths of young girls suddenly transplanted, with all their freshness and inexperience from home—even from a neglected one—and cast among strangers. So he endeavoured, after he had obtained them situations, still to make them feel that he was interested in their welfare, and that he watched over them from a distance. He encouraged them to write to himself, or to his daughter—freely to unburden themselves of their sorrows, and to make known their wants. And they seldom failed to respond to the invitation. The intercourse had the best possible effect. The confidence thus established was the salvation of many. It was at once a restraint upon the girls themselves, and on those who would have betrayed them.

Among all the girls of Little Millbrook whom Mr. Arnold and his gentle daughter gathered round them at the Rectory, there was not one more deservedly a favourite than Jessie Hart. She was the neatest—the most cheerful; and, as they who thought of such things said, the prettiest girl in the village. She was very quick and active—moved with the lightness and agility of a fawn—and never did a clumsy thing. A friend of my father's—a worldly man moving much

in aristocratic society—saw her at the Rectory one day, and said that “it would cost very little trouble to make a lady of that girl.” I do not suppose that Mr. Arnold or Lucy thought much of this; but the rector had an especial tenderness of regard for her because she was an orphan, and the child of one a humble labourer in the parochial ministry—and, on her own account, because she was a good and teachable girl. Miss Arnold, too, knew that she was the neatest needlewoman in the parish, and that not one read aloud so correctly, and so intelligently, and with so sweet a voice. And so it happened, that when Mr. Arnold’s brother—the London lawyer—asked the vicar of Little Millbrook to recommend him a neat, well-conducted maiden, of good person and address, to do the lighter duties of his house, he recommended Jessie Hart; and in the course of a few weeks she was duly installed in Guildford-street.

The old lawyer hated flunkeys. He might have kept half a dozen had he wished—but he detested the whole race of men-servants, and a neat active girl like Jessie Hart did all a footman’s work for half the money, with half the noise, and looked a

hundred times prettier whilst doing it. This, indeed, was the worst part of the matter. She looked a great



deal too *pi-
quante*. Her
light figure
—her slender
waist — her
small hands
—her elastic
step — her
graceful car-
riage — were
all so pleasant
and attrac-
tive, that it
was difficult

not to follow her with your eyes as she moved about the room, doing her spiriting gently, and with a ready cheerfulness, which made you feel that it was no task-work to her. There was something, too, very open in her manner. She was not forward or immodest, but there was a dangerous kind of unreserve about her which might have been misunderstood. It was, in

reality, nothing but frankness and cordiality—but with people less single-minded than herself, it placed her at a disadvantage; and—it ruined her at last.

How Mr. Arnold may tell—It has been necessary that I should write this much in explanation to render intelligible what fell from the good man's lips. He asked me if I knew that Jessie Hart had returned home? And I answered that I had heard a vague story about her return—but that I hoped what I heard was untrue.

“Untrue! Alas! Sullivan”—and there was a deep and sorrowful solemnity in his voice—“if what you heard was a story of poor Jessie's shame—and if you heard associated with it the name of Gilbert Arnold, my son, it was not untrue.”

I could say nothing, and he continued: “Sullivan, I hope I am not uncharitable—I hope I am not intolerant—I do not think that in a harsh or unforgiving spirit I ever viewed the errors of the young—I know what are their temptations—I know that feeling, for the most part, is stronger than principle within them—that passion is headstrong, irresistible—that there are some allurements not to be withstood. It is often

permitted to us, Sullivan, righteously to pity whilst we condemn. For those who love overmuch, there is always some pity to be claimed—we say the sinner was a loving one, and we shed a tear over the sin. If my son had come to me and said, ‘Father, I have sinned before Heaven and against her—but the temptation was strong and I was weak, and we love one another,’ I would have taken him into my arms and blest him as he lay upon my bosom—but I have no such comfort as this”

Then he went on, after another pause, “You know that Jessie Hart went to live in my brother’s house. He seldom wrote to me that he did not say, ‘Your little Millbrook maiden pleases me very much.’ Jessie, too, used to write now and then to my daughter, always saying that she was very happy, and that her master was very kind. Stern as he is to his equals, my brother is always gentle and considerate towards his dependents; and Jessie did her best to please him. All this delighted me much—but within the last few months, Sullivan, my brother has written more than once that his little Millbrook maiden had lost her

colour and lost her spirits, and he was afraid that London air and the confinement of the streets did not agree with her health. This did not seem improbable—but at this time, Sullivan, Jessie herself ceased to write to my daughter—Month after month passed away, and no letter came. At last Lucy wrote to ask the cause of her silence—said she had heard from her uncle that she had become less cheerful and active, and hoped she was not seriously ill. An answer came—it was very brief—but oh! how eloquent in its brevity. It said that she was not worthy any longer to correspond with the pure inmates of the Millbrook parsonage.

“We were not left very long in the painful doubt which then beset us. Jessie Hart came back to her mother's house—and poured out her sorrows, weeping and sobbing like a child. She said that she had been ruined—betrayed—but she would not tell the name of her betrayer. The widow—it was an error of which she afterwards repented in anguish of spirit—closed her heart against her unhappy daughter, and overwhelmed her with bitter words. Something of

this reached me on the same evening. I heard that Jessie Hart had returned home bearing a burden of shame, and that her mother had closed her heart against the fallen one. This was all that I then knew. It was on the evening before last. I thought much and painfully of the matter. It disturbed my repose that night—but I determined to go early on the following morning to the Widow Hart's, to remonstrate with her—to comfort the afflicted one, and to turn, if I could, the great trial to good account. I felt assured in my inmost heart that the poor child had been more sinned against than sinning; and that pity might look down upon her woes.

“On my way to the cottage I met the postman, who gave me my letters. There was one from my brother. I opened it with the assurance that I should find something to guide me to a right understanding of the history of Jessie's ruin. The first line was sufficient. My brother is not a man of many words. He goes at once to the point. Without any introduction, he told me that my scoundrel of a son had seduced his little waiting-maid. I was standing under

a tree at the time, and I leant against the trunk, or I should have fallen.

“ I read on as well as I could—Sullivan, here is the letter. My brother goes on to say: ‘ Bad as is this in its simple truth, I could have forgiven the boy. I have not forgotten that I was once young—and the girl was a tempting one. But the dog has behaved infamously to her—a mean, pitiful scoundrel as he is. He first of all denied it altogether—tried to shift the blame upon another. Then, when he was driven from that ground, he took up another and worse position—declared that the girl had seduced him—thrown herself in his way—purposely tempted him; and so, brother, I hope you will forgive me, I kicked the dog out of my house. I am sorry for it. I am always sorry when I am violent; but I do not think that I could have helped it—even if you had been by.’

“ It was not right,” continued Mr. Arnold, laying down the letter—“ but the provocation was very great. He may have known something, perhaps, of what the poor girl sobbed out to me when I saw her in her mother’s cottage. When I called, Mrs. Hart

was still angry and indignant—clamorous in her upbraidings. She had only the vilest terms of reproach to bestow upon the unhappy girl, and there was no epithet too strong to express her sense of the conduct of the seducer. It was not until I said to her, ‘Mrs. Hart, your daughter’s seducer is my son,’ that she ceased from her upbraidings. Jessie uttered a short, sharp cry, and flung herself at my feet. ‘I did not tell her—indeed I did not,’ she said; and clung to me as though she would deprecate my anger. I raised her, and spoke kindly to her. She was very humble and contrite. Great as was her sorrow, she seemed to think but little of her own sufferings. It touched me to the heart to see how much the poor child thought of the disgrace which this sad affair would bring upon my family. And what would I think of her, she said—what would Miss Lucy think. I said that we should pity her ever from the very depths of our hearts. I never could see, Sullivan, the benefit of harshness in these cases—the poor are very prone to be harsh to their unfortunate children. They leave them to themselves—send them out into the

world to earn their own livelihoods—plunge them into a great sea of temptation; and then pour upon them all the vials of their wrath, if the neglected ones do not chance to swim bravely through it. I have seen very much of this. They only remember that they are parents when they have something cruel to say. They exercise the parental right of condemning and restraining, though they have forgotten the parental duty of encouraging and supporting. They are angry because they have to reap as they have sown; and, not seldom, by their ill-timed severity, perpetuate the evil against which it is addressed. I believe that the chances of reformation are very much in proportion to the amount of kindness and forbearance which is shown towards the offender in the hour of suffering and remorse. Jessie's heart might have been hardened for ever, if I had closed mine against her, as did her ill-judged mother. But I spoke kindly to her; and all the softness of her nature was poured out as in a great flood. She wept bitterly, and told me, through her tears, the history of her undoing. I do not doubt the truth of her story. She told me

how it came to pass that she had yielded to Gilbert the last proof of womanly affection. He was always in some kind of trouble and difficulty; and Jessie's gentle heart felt for his sufferings, without taking account of his sins. She saw and understood the one; the other, perhaps, she was unwilling to believe, and at all events she did not understand. Gilbert often complained to her of the harshness of his uncle. She several times, with true womanly kindness, assisted him in his difficulties, and screened him from detection; and perhaps it was this—the antithesis, as it were, Sullivan, of the *odisse quem læseris* doctrine—that caused her in time to regard him with tenderness and affection. He took advantage of her kindness—little by little contrived to break down the barriers of her modesty and reserve—and at last, when my brother was absent for a few days on professional business, consummated the poor girl's ruin. He had been ill—Jessie tended him as he was recovering from his sickness; all her womanly sympathies were awakened in full force—and how did he repay her gentle ministrations? He turned the idleness of convalescence to dreadful account, by maturing his crim-

designs. He feigned a love which he was not capable of feeling; and, in an hour of weakness, she fell. If it had been any one but Gilbert, she says, she might have been safe—she would have written to me or to Lucy, or would have spoken to my brother—but because he was my son she was off her guard. She had not this safeguard—and she fell into the snare.

“And now, Sullivan,” continued the good rector, “what is to be done? Gilbert came down here last night, seemingly not at all contrite. If I could only see in him one sign of penitence and humility, I might hope that all would be well; but he has come down here, violent, exasperated—full of bitterness against his uncle. Of the offence itself he speaks with dreadful levity—repeats that it was the girl’s fault—does not even say that he loves her. I had but one wish—one prayer—that he would marry her. The world talks of the discredit of such alliances—of their ‘bringing disgrace into the family.’ But the disgrace, Sullivan, is in the crime, not in the reparation. It seems to me that if Gilbert were to marry the girl, he would wipe away the disgrace. But he treated the proposal with scorn. Was he going to

throw himself away, indeed, upon a low-born cottage-girl—was he going to make a fool of himself in the eyes of all the neighbourhood, and for ever forfeit his chance of advancing himself by marrying a girl with money? And then, Sullivan, he put forth that terrible argument which it chills the blood even to read of in books—the argument of the libertine who inflicts the last death-wound upon his victim, by declaring that one who has yielded before marriage, has proved herself unworthy to be a wife. He called her, as I live, Sullivan, the very thing which he himself had made her.”

Here the good old man ceased to speak; bowed his head; and groaned aloud. It was not the first sin which he bewailed so bitterly. It was the after-conduct of the betrayer—the selfish meanness, the heartless cruelty—first sinning with and then against her—making his own wickedness a pretext for further wrong.

I did not know what to say. I had no comfort to offer. In such a case, ordinary words of consolation are mere impertinencies—and who knew so well as Mr. Arnold the way to the only fount whence the

living waters of true solace are to be drawn? It was all a great mystery to him; but he never doubted. With "faith abiding the appointed time," he prayed on, unanswered. It was not merely that he prayed, morning and evening, for his unhappy son, but that he lived in an habitual state of prayer. And yet the more the good man prayed, the more the plague-spot spread. The more earnest his supplications, the redder became Gilbert Arnold's sins.

But Mr. Arnold was not long silent. He had not yet completed the painful task that he had set himself. So, presently, he went on:

"It appears to me, Sullivan, that there is yet one chance of inducing Gilbert to do justice to the unhappy girl. He is clamorous for more money. Deeply in debt, persecuted on all sides by creditors rendered desperate by frequent deception, and in daily apprehension of being deprived of his personal liberty, he seems willing to do anything for money, and has hinted, that if I would pay his debts, and place a certain sum of money at his disposal to begin life with, as he says, he would marry Jessie Hart, and seek a livelihood abroad. There is something in this,

however, extremely distasteful to me : I do not like to take advantage of his necessities even to accomplish a good work ; and I am doubtful whether a marriage, contracted under such circumstances, would not be productive of more misery than happiness to the poor girl. But besides this, I have not the means to carry out such an arrangement. The sum he names is larger than I can produce. I have gone carefully through my accounts, and I find it impossible, even if I were convinced in my own mind of the propriety of the measure, to put it in execution."

" If it be only a question of money" I began, glad of the opportunity which now first presented itself to me of saying something to the point. I knew that what I could not do myself, my father, the most generous of men, would joyfully assist me to do. It is needless to relate the conversation which ensued—to enter into financial details—and to show how Mr. Arnold's scruples—for he was unwilling to receive assistance for such a purpose—were eventually overcome. Long and earnestly we conversed on this painfully-interesting subject. It appeared to both of us that the

matter by no means reduced itself into a mere financial question, and, indeed, we did not so consider it for a moment. We discussed, in every possible point of view, the means of effecting the reformation of my revered friend's unhappy son. Mr. Arnold was of opinion that my influence over Gilbert would be more powerful than his own—not that Gilbert loved me, for that I knew he did not, but because I was of his own age—like him, beginning to tread the perilous paths of manhood—like him, surrounded by its temptations, and more likely, therefore, to understand his position, and to enter into his feelings. It was certain, at all events, that Gilbert Arnold regarded his father as no competent authority on such a point as that on which he had undertaken to legislate; and it was at least possible, therefore, that my opinion might carry more weight with it, and have more effect in shaping the conduct of the good rector's erratic son. The fear of ridicule is very strong in young men, and it seemed to Gilbert Arnold that he might be laughed at as a fool for following the course recommended by the unworldly wisdom of his reverend

father. But it was possible, if he saw that the same course found favor in the eyes of a young man like myself, who had seen as much of the world as the majority of my contemporaries, that he might not set himself so strenuously against it. It was agreed at last that I should take an opportunity of conversing with him on the subject—of recommending him to marry the poor girl, and begin a new life on a new scene of action, where his past history would be unknown to the associates around him.

And I did so. On the following day I invited him to shoot with me over my father's grounds; and as, after we had enjoyed some tolerable sport, we seated ourselves in a sheltered nook to discuss the contents of a basket of provision, which one of the keeper's boys had carried for us, I brought round the conversation to the case of Jessie Hart. He received my remarks in a more friendly spirit than I had ventured to anticipate. The good cheer—for he had drunk several tumblers of ale and some brandy—had exhilarated him, and he was in an unwontedly good humour. At first he laughed, and only said

that he supposed the governor had been talking me over. But he presently became more serious, and listened attentively to what I said.

I spoke of his position generally—of his disinclination for dry legal studies, and the little probability there was of the schism between him and his uncle ever being bridged over—of the difficulty, under such circumstances, of earning for himself a comfortable livelihood in England—the almost certainty, indeed, of his path being beset with much trouble and much pain; whilst, on the other hand, in one of our distant colonies, he might begin a new life among new associates, and soon make his way to fortune.

“Upon my soul,” said Gilbert Arnold, pouring out another tumbler of ale, “there is something in what you say. I am beginning to get mortally tired of this kind of life. It might be dull work in the Bush, but there would be no duns there. It would be something to start with a clean score, and open a new account with the world. I am horribly *blasé*, my good fellow—cursedly tired of everything. I can’t go on in this kind of way for ever—I should

cut the concern before long, by cutting my own throat."

Nothing could be more favorable than this—so I began to discourse upon the fine healthy excitement of a life of enterprise in one of our noble colonies in Australia or Southern Africa, as contrasted with an existence of wearing anxiety and perpetual embarrassment in a crowded city at home—every man's hand against him, and his hand against every man. It was soon evident that I had not spoken in vain. Whether it were my eloquence or my father's ale that warmed Gilbert Arnold, I do not pretend to know; but he soon began to glow with something like enthusiasm at the thought of the glorious independence of a life in the great new world beyond the seas.

Then, watching my opportunity, I pointed out the advantages of entering upon this new life, attended by a helpmate—by a true, loving woman to cheer his solitude, to minister to his wants, to attend him in the hour of sickness and sorrow; I ridiculed the idea of taking out a fine lady to the Bush—one who would

probably be a burden, and not an assistance to him ; who would overwhelm him with complaints and reproaches, instead of encouraging him with words of cheerfulness and hope. And then I told him that I thought Jessie Hart would be just the girl for a colonist's wife.

Gilbert said nothing in reply to this, but he looked as though he were turning over the matter in his mind—so I went on to discourse upon the good qualities of the girl and of her great outward attractions. I said that she would not discredit him—that the gentility of her appearance, and the propriety of her manners, were such that, in a new country, where her history was not known, she would hardly be regarded as a person of inferior condition,—that in colonial society there was necessarily less refinement than at home, that people were valued there more for their serviceable qualities than for the mere elegancies of over-civilisation,—that what people called “unequal marriages” were frequent in those countries, and that there could be no doubt, that one who had given him such signal proofs of her self-sacrificing affection,

would make him a fond, a dutiful, and faithful wife. And to all of this Gilbert Arnold assented. In a paroxysm of candour, good sense, and good feeling, he declared that I was right; and that he thought he should take my advice.

And he did take my advice—that is, he intimated to his father his willingness to marry Jessie Hart, and to proceed to one of our Australian settlements. It was arranged that Gilbert's debts should be paid, and that a certain sum of money should be procured to launch him fairly on his new life. Some of his debts were pressing, and they were immediately paid off. Having very little faith in the stability of his resolutions, I was fearful of a relapse, and exerted myself to prevent it. It was not difficult to keep him much in my society—for all the best shooting in the neighbourhood was over my father's grounds, and there were always horses at my command in his stables. So Gilbert Arnold and I rode together and shot together; and I never lost an opportunity of endeavouring to strengthen his good resolves.

It is with the profoundest grief and humiliation that I write what follows. I hasten over it as some-

thing which must be written, but which cannot be written without a sharp spasm of pain. Everything had been arranged. Gilbert's debts had been paid, the plan of his future colonial life determined upon. Money had been raised to pay for his outfit and his passage, and to enable him to embark a little capital in the purchase of land and of stock, when Jessie Hart fell sick. Anxiety and excitement nipped in the bud her prospect of becoming a mother, and for some weeks she was laid prostrate upon the sick bed. The marriage was necessarily delayed; but Gilbert urged that there was no reason why the preparations for their departure should be also delayed. Whilst Jessie was convalescing, he could be providing the outfit, and securing accommodation in a passenger-ship. My heart sunk within me when Gilbert Arnold turned his back upon Little Millbrook. He went up to London, with a considerable sum of money in his pocket, and I dreaded the results. But he returned after a very brief absence, brought a plan of the ship, in which he alleged his passage had been taken, sundry letters from the captain and agents, some outfitters' bills, and other evidences of the progress he

was making, and said that now he was eager to complete his arrangements to be married, and to depart.

He was outwardly much changed—much changed for the better. He appeared altogether a steadier and better man. There were many outward signs of real reformation. Viewing all these favorable symptoms, good Mr. Arnold rejoiced in thankfulness of heart, and believed that his prayers had been answered. It was now agreed that Gilbert should proceed again to town for a few days to complete his arrangements, and then return to Little Millbrook to be married. He went, carrying with him more money; and scarcely had he departed, when it was found that Jessie Hart had disappeared. Gilbert had persuaded her to join him; he had told her a series of lies, to the effect that it had been arranged that they should be married in London, where the marriage would attract no attention—that his uncle had been reconciled to him, and had expressed a desire that the marriage should take place from his house—that he would receive Jessie for a day or two, and then that they could be united, by license, in the nearest metropolitan church. All this Jessie believed. But the

truth was soon forced painfully upon her. Instead of taking her to London, he took her to Dover ; carried her across the channel to Boulogne and Paris, declaring all the time that he loved her dearly, that she should accompany him to Australia as his wife, but that he wished her to see, before her departure, a little more of the European world. Poor Jessie ! In spite of this new deception, she loved the unworthy man who had betrayed her ; and for a time she forgot everything in the delight of his companionship. He treated her with an outward show of kindness. There was nothing then to sour his temper, for he had an abundance of money at his command, and Jessie was in truth a charming companion. She was so delighted with everything she saw, and so *naïve* in her expressions of pleasure. Then, too, everybody seemed to admire her. She became so prettily the ladylike costume which she wore, that Gilbert himself soon became quite proud of her. She “picked up the language,” too, more quickly than he did. In every respect she proved herself to be an apt scholar ; and he inwardly acknowledged the truth of the saying I had repeated to him, that “it would be easy to

make a lady of that girl." What Gilbert Arnold might have been I do not know ; he had naturally good abilities, and a fine presence ; but, viewing him only as he was, vulgarised, both in body and in mind, by much dissipation and bad company, I believe that, even conventionally speaking, Jessie was the more refined of the two.

A month of excitement passed away. Jessie never looked forward—never looked back. She lived in a delirious present. But at the end of the month Gilbert Arnold's money was exhausted. He was utterly disgraced—he dared not return home. He did not know what to do They found themselves in the streets of London with their last guinea in their purse. * * * * *

In the meanwhile, cruel was the sorrow which touched the heart and bowed the frame of the vicar of Little Millbrook. It was not only that this cup had been dashed from his lips just as his thirsty soul was beginning to drink the waters of sustaining consolation ; it was not only that his wretched boy had proved himself so unworthy, had so foully deceived him, and so fatally disgraced himself, but that the

other shadow of his life had darkened around him—and, humanly speaking, he was about to stand alone in the world. This last blow had been too heavy for his gentle daughter to bear. She had reeled and fallen under the cruel shock. Whilst Gilbert was draining the cup of pleasure on the continent, Lucy Arnold was leaving her quiet home at Millbrook to set out on a longer journey. Her death, like her life, was beautiful. I cannot write of it now. Another time I may tell how, blessing and blest, she passed away from her father's bosom to sit at her Saviour's feet.

Poor Mr. Arnold! All these things were against him ; but he only said, "It is well." And still the good man prayed fervently; still his faith was not overcast.



SERMON THE SECOND.

It was a cold foggy morning in November. The teeming homes of London were wrapped in the yellow mist. Over broad streets and spacious squares—over narrow alleys and pent-up courts, it spread itself out everywhere like a shroud. It sat heavily on the river, as though it almost checked its tides and currents, and sent it, with a slow and sleepy langour, creeping on beneath the bridges. There was something of a frost with it. The atmosphere was searchingly cold. It seemed to penetrate the very bones of the few who were abroad, as day was breaking over the great city. It was not a morning to tempt folks from their homes, for pleasure; and business took few into the streets, for it was the dawn of the Christian's day of rest.

But ever on those London pavements—in the summer heats, and in wintry frosts—in sunshine, and in fog—in all seasons, and at all hours—even at the cheerless daybreak of a November Sabbath, some are to be seen whom neither business nor pleasure keeps out in the morning air. There are always houseless and friendless wanderers abroad in the London streets, sitting on cold door-steps, huddling in dark corners ; crouching wherever shelter is to be found. And on this November morning there was not less than the wonted crop of misery in the streets.

Day broke feebly over London. The morning light struggled dimly through the heavy fog, and was slow to drive from their wretched hiding-places the desolate beings who had been sleeping, in cold and darkness, on their stony beds. Many, doubtless, had not slept at all ; but had shivered and groaned through the troubled night. One I knew, who, for many haunted hours, had been painfully reviewing a mis-spent life. He had known better days. He had recently been leading a life of heartless licentiousness and depravity, and was now sunk—Heaven knows

how deeply—in the depths of sensual degradation. I cannot trace all the downward stages of Gilbert Arnold's humiliating career. Enough, that after a night of low debauchery, he was glad, on this November morning, to hide himself from the police, and to shelter himself from the wind, behind a column of piled-up market-baskets, on the skirts of the central colonnade of Covent Garden.

There was a stillness and a repose about the great market, which contrasted strangely with the noise and bustle of the week-day traffic, when the silence of early morning is broken by the sound of many voices, and the rattling of many wheels, and, all about the neighbourhood of the "Garden," life is at fever-heat in the struggling dawn, and subsides as the day advances. But all was now hushed and tranquil. The noisy market-carts were gone. The noisier marketwomen were gone too. The buyers and sellers were in their beds, and all the still-life of that busy place of traffic was trimly and tidily arranged as for a day of rest. Even the round market-baskets sate one on another in columns of sabbatical

repose; and behind one of these columns crouched Gilbert Arnold, sheltering himself from the cold and the police.

Haggard, unshaven, with bloodshot eyes, with hollow cheeks, with lank black hair, a picture of suffering debauchery; his clothes, once the clothes of a gentleman, all soiled and tattered, and disordered—one whom it would have been hard to pity for his poverty, for the aspect of woe was so overlaid by vice.

Slowly day dawned upon the metropolis; feebly the morning light struggled through the thick fog. It was nearly nine o'clock before Gilbert Arnold began to move his cramped limbs, and crawl from his hiding-place. He did not know what to do. His head ached, and he was very thirsty. A little way from the spot on which he had spent the night—before the Church of St. Paul's—stood a pump, whose cool fresh waters he had tasted before. He now drunk greedily, and dashed the water from his hollowed hands into his heated face, and bared his forehead to the morning air. He felt mightily re-

freshed—strengthened. It seemed as though something of new life had been suddenly imparted to him; and without attaching to the words any distinct meaning, he began to mutter to himself—hardly, indeed, did he articulate—“fountains of living waters—fountains of living waters;” and other little scraps of Scripture, which he had learnt when a boy, came back to his recollection. He saw that he stood before the portals of a church. It had been long since he had passed the threshold of a temple dedicated to God; but now it occurred to him that he might find comfort beneath the sacred roof, if it were only warmth and rest. It wanted yet nearly two hours of church time, and it was likely that the impulse would wear out; but as he walked away, heedless of the direction in which he was going, still there recurred to him the thought of the church in Covent Garden, and still there came back to his mind a vivid recollection of the words, “fountains of living waters,” and he began obscurely to think that something besides warmth and rest might be found beneath the sacred roof. So, after strolling about for some time

in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn he returned again to Covent Garden, and glad was he when the first sound of the bells announced that the doors were open. He walked in. The beadle, who met him in the vestibule, seemed half inclined to repulse him; for in the eyes of that functionary he did not seem as though he had "dressed himself" properly for church. But he walked resolutely on—pushed open the inner doors—walked up the centre aisle, which was mainly occupied with cross-benches—free sittings for the poor, and seated himself on the foremost of them, close to a well-heated stove. Presently a few old people, seemingly the *habitués* of those free sittings, dropped in, and took up their places near him, and then some women and children, and two or three strangers of a higher class, waiting, perhaps, for the well-feed favors of the pew-openers in the shape of an unoccupied pew. Then the pews themselves began to fill; and as family after family poured in, Gilbert began to speculate as to their condition, and to think of the station he had lost.

The church was exceeding dark for that hour of

the day. Some of the outer fog had made its way into the building, and everything was seen as through a yellow haze. Presently, the gas was turned on to the glass shades on either side of the reading-desk and the pulpit, and to Gilbert Arnold it seemed as though the lights shone dimly through the mist. But there was a mist in his own eyes. Everything was dim and obscure; and when the curate entered the reading-desk, and an old man beside Gilbert civilly held out his prayer-book to him that he might read with him, it was some time before he could trace a word.

He found it difficult at first to follow the prayers; indeed, he could not hear what was said. There was a continual noise in his ears, as though many waters were rushing and roaring through his head. He could not fix his attention. His eye, perhaps, caught a few words of the prayer-book, and he continued to dwell upon them without going on to the next. But gradually, his thoughts began to marshal themselves into something like orderly array; the noise in his ears subsided; the film passed away from his eyes;

and when the preacher ascended the pulpit, all Gilbert Arnold's faculties seemed to have re-awakened into full life. He saw distinctly; he heard distinctly. He fixed his eyes full upon the preacher, and his ears drank in the words of his text: "*He shall feed his flock like a shepherd.*"

The words, in a moment, rivetted the attention of Gilbert Arnold. He had been thinking of himself only a little time before as a "lost sheep;" and as the reverend speaker, earnestly and eloquently, as one whose whole soul was in his holy work, dwelt upon the untiring watchfulness and tender care of the good shepherd; as he described Him in touching scriptural language, "Gathering the lambs with his arms, and carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young," the hardened man of the world seemed to soften in all his nature, and he opened his heart gladly to receive the lessons of truth. If that touching discourse had been written expressly for Gilbert Arnold, it could not have been more appropriate to his state of feeling and condition of life. It was, in effect, an invitation

to the weary and heavy-laden to lay their sorrows at the foot of the cross ; and when the preacher, citing still the noble chapter which had furnished his text, solemnly enunciated the words, " Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail. But they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint," the unhappy man started, as though they had been addressed to him by name. It seemed, indeed, to Gilbert Arnold, that the holy man was pouring out all his truthful eloquence especially into *his* ear ; that he was affectionately exhorting *him* to a new way of life, gently leading *his* footsteps into the paths of peace. The swimming eyes of the preacher, he thought, were fixed on him, as his were fixed upon the eager, glowing face, which almost, as it were, with heavenly radiance broke through the gloom of the November morning. And with the gentle devotional feelings, which were calming his troubled breast, something of superstitious awe then began to blend itself ; and, with

unconscious adaptation of the words of the Jewish officers, he said to himself, "Never man spoke as this man."

But it was not the solemnity of the preacher's manner; it was its kindness that touched Gilbert Arnold. The discourse was one of earnest affectionate entreaty; it "allured to brighter worlds." It told the wretched man that which, above all things, he then most needed to know—that there was hope even for him. He felt that he was no longer an outcast. The fold was open to receive him. The shepherd was there, gently to lead him with a sustaining hand under the burden of his great trouble. God had not hid his face from him. No; it was over such as him—the heart-broken, the penitent, that there might be great rejoicing in Heaven. All through the sermon ran this great assurance—this cheering promise; and in its closing sentence rose the precious words, that all who lay their burdens at the foot of the cross, shall hunger no more, and thirst no more, "neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,

and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"And God will wipe away all tears from your eyes—wipe away all tears from your eyes!" The words seemed to ring, as with angelic music, in his ears, sinking down, and making sweet melodies in his heart. A strange, new feeling diffused itself throughout all his inward being—it soothed, it softened, it subdued him. It was as though a great stone had been taken out of his breast, and sentient flesh placed there, pulsing and vibrating, in its stead. Miserable as he was, there seemed to blend with his miseries something of peace and hope—almost of seraphic bliss. There came across the troubled waters of his soul a balmy odorous air, as it were the breath of a new life. He did not know what it was; but the Holy Spirit was brooding over him, the Comforter was within.

He passed out with the crowd of people, through the churchyard into the open space around the market. Then he walked on—he did not know, he did not care, whither. Other churches were pouring

out their congregations. He fell into the stream, wondering whether they had heard from the lips of the holy man who had been addressing them such words as were making music in his own heart. Then he asked himself how it happened, if there were many such teachers abroad, that there was still such a flood of wickedness pouring itself over the world. Why was there so much strife and tumult, when the way to peace was so plain?—why so much darkness and bewilderment, such blind gropings and desperate stumblings, when the glorious light of the Gospel was streaming full upon their paths? He had been looking over the prayer-book of an old man who had sate by him in the church; and his eyes had caught the words at the head of one of the psalms, “*Lucerna pedibus meis.*” They now seemed to rise up before him, and to spread themselves in gigantic characters of light over the murky heavens. “*Lucerna pedibus meis*—‘a lanthorn unto my feet—a light unto my path.’” He went on repeating the words to himself, as though the utterance of them comforted and strengthened him. Suddenly, high above the house-

tops, full in his upturned face, the sun burst through the watery clouds, and almost seemed to speak to him. He was in that peculiar state of impressibility in which a man may be supposed to be who has just seen a miracle wrought before his eyes. He believed that in that sudden burst of light from above there was the visible presence of the Almighty appealing to and encouraging him. He walked on—more than ever awed and subdued. If he had lived eighteen centuries before, and had just touched the hem of the Redeemer's garment, he could not have been more conscious of the *great cure*. The scales had fallen from his eyes; he was no longer staggering in darkness.

Gilbert Arnold had walked down the Strand, under Temple Bar, down Fleet-street, and over Ludgate-hill, heeding not the direction which he was taking. But when the great dome of St. Paul's confronted him, he knew that he had wandered eastward, and that he had gone far from the hallowed edifice which had witnessed the dawn of his new life. He was impatient for the time when its doors would be reopened, and he could not bear the thought of wander-

ing far from them. So he retraced his steps. He had eaten nothing all that day; but he was unconscious of hunger or exhaustion, and it did not occur to him to spend the few remaining pence in his possession upon a hasty meal at a cheap eating-house. There was but one appetite within him at that time—an unappeasable yearning after more of that Gospel-food which had given him so much strength. It was little more than two o'clock when he found himself again opposite the church in the market-place. An old woman, one of the pew-openers, came out of it, from a side-door. Gilbert accosted her, and asked at what time the doors would be opened for afternoon service; and she answered that there would be no afternoon service, but that there would be evening service at half-past six.

He was bitterly disappointed. It seemed a very age to wait for the opening of those doors. All through the long and dreary afternoon to wait, when his whole soul was hungering after more of the precious nourishment. What should he do? He walked away, for it was a relief to him to be in motion, and

fell in again with the tide of people who were pouring westward along the Strand. The afternoon was one of unusual brightness for that season of the year, and London seemed to be emptying itself out in the streets. The sharp pang of disappointment which had come suddenly upon him, very soon passed away, and he subsided again into that state of hopefulness and peace which had wrapped him around on his exode from the church. He was wandering about in a new world. Following a little knot of holiday-makers, he soon found himself in St. James's Park. He had passed a church, the bells of which invited him to enter ; but he said to himself that it was not his church, and he shrunk from entering any other. His foot was on the step, but an instinctive apprehension kept him back—an apprehension that the charm might be broken, if he heard other words, uttered in another manner, by other lips. The magic power might not be there, and the spell might cease to work.

So he went into St. James's Park. There were many people there—sauntering or sitting about, or feeding the birds on the water. He sate himself down on a bench, and watched a party of young

children with their attendants. There was something in the figure of one of the girls, though she moved with much less grace, which reminded him of Jessie Hart. His thoughts then began to busy themselves with a long and tender retrospect. His fancy wandered back to Millbrook, to the quiet little church there, and his good father's ministrations. And he asked himself why he had never listened to the Gospel-teachings of his pious parent. Was the holy man he had just heard holier than Mr. Arnold?—was there more truth on his lips—more purity in his heart? Why had he never been moved by the touching appeals of the good rector of Little Millbrook? The question was one he could not answer; no one could answer it. He could only surmise that the time had not then come.

Long, long he sate there, unconscious of the cold which was benumbing him, till the brightness of the afternoon passed away, and the gloom of evening began to descend upon the Park. He had been thinking, long and vividly, over the past; many long-forgotten scenes and incidents had risen up before him—but there had been nothing very painful in

the retrospect. Such an atmosphere of peace seemed to surround him, that the recollection of the sinful past was robbed of half its terrors. But suddenly—how it was he could not tell—the armour of this great tranquillity seemed to fall away from him, and remorse entered his soul, as though a knife had stabbed him to the heart. He saw before him Jessie Hart, with flaunting finery and painted face, treading the cruel streets of London, to earn a wretched pittance by a life of mercenary sin.

Yes, it had come to this—he had brought her to this. He thought of what she had been—of what she now was. He could not brush away the vision of that haggard, painted face—of those *two* faces—the one full of innocence and blushing with health, the other pale with disease and distorted by sin. He rose up and walked away, but still ever before him were the two Jessie Harts—the Jessie Hart of Little Millbrook, and the Jessie Hart of the London streets. The sharp spasms of pain almost suffocated him; and people looked at him, through the twilight, as he passed on groaning aloud. To his dying day he never forgot the horror of that double vision. He

left the Park, strode up Whitehall ; but ever the two Jessie Harts seemed to confront him as he went. The



horrible contrast flung itself, with appalling reproachfulness, in his face. The two extremes of 'hopeful innocence and de-



spairing degradation were there. She had sunk into the lowest abyss of infamy and pollution. He had done it. He had connived at—recommended, I might write, the dreadful course to which she had betaken herself. He had even shared with her the wages of her misery. True to him—true to the last, forgiving everything—the heartlessness, the cruelty, the black treachery of her betrayer—she had loved him throughout all her sufferings, and, with a true woman's fidelity, kissed the hand that had smitten her to the earth.

On went the two Jessie Harts. It seemed to Gilbert Arnold that they were leading him somewhere, and that he was passively following. They traversed the open space by Charing Cross, passed St. Martin's Church, and struck into one of the streets leading towards Covent Garden. Then Gilbert Arnold began to understand the vision, which he was following through the cold twilight. He knew what was the meaning of the sign, and he uttered a cry of pleasure. Light broke in upon him again; he knew what he would do.

"I will save her," he said to himself.

And the vision was gone—the two Jessie Harts were no longer there, gliding noiselessly before him. His terror was gone with the vision. He felt strong and fearless again, braced, as it were, by a great resolution. He was about to take his wretched victim to hear the holy man whose words had softened his own heart; and he prayed, as he went, that they two might leave the church in one holy frame of mind—repentant of the past, hopeful of the future. He well knew where she dwelt. He knew that she dwelt in a street where clustered many of her class, in the vici-

nity of Drury-lane. He strode on, still muttering to himself, "I will save her; yes, I will save her!" In a little while he was at the door of the house in which she rented one furnished room. The door was ajar; he entered, walked up two flights of narrow stairs, and, without rapping at the door, entered Jessie's well-known apartment. He believed that he would find her there. He knew that at this hour of the day she was commonly at home; that she had not yet begun to ply her noxious night trade. And he was right. There she was! A few minutes more and he would have been too late. She was putting on her bonnet.

Poor Jessie Hart! There was still something attractive about her. Her beautiful figure had lost some of its former roundness, but none of its old delicacy and grace. Her face was thinner and older than it was. There was an unnatural brilliancy in her eyes; and the rich colour which nature had once given to her cheeks, was now supplied wholly by art. She was standing before a chest of drawers, on which was a small looking-glass, some toilet articles, and a little bunch of flowers in a broken tea-cup; for she

had not lost her old country tastes, and many a small coin, which her companions would have spent on fiery drink, went to the purchase of a fragrant nosegay. Those fresh country flowers—who can say how much they did to keep alive within her some sparks of her better nature—a green spot in the midst of that great desert of crime?

She started when she heard the door opened. There was little light in the room—only a solitary candle beside the looking-glass, and she did not at first recognise the intruder. But hoarse and husky as it was from passion and exhaustion, the well-known voice of Gilbert Arnold soon declared the identity of her visitor.

He only said, "Jessie."

She turned round, and went forward to meet him in her old loving way. She had become used to his pale haggard face, to his uncombed hair, his unshaven cheeks, his soiled and tattered garments. She had become used to him in his fallen state—every trace of the gentleman utterly obliterated, the ruffian and the reprobate stamped broadly upon him; and it was, perhaps, because he was so sunk and debased, because

he was so friendless and resourceless—altogether something so abject and contemptible, such a wreck of what he once had been—that, in her overflowing pity, she clung to him with the greater fondness. It was not now, therefore, that he was pale and woe-begone, and very soiled and tattered, that she started when she saw him, but that there was something unaccustomed in his face—signs of a great conflict which seemed to have convulsed him, so unlike to the dull and dogged look which his face had lately worn. The change was for the better. There was more of humanity in that troubled countenance ; but Jessie only saw that something had greatly agitated him, and she asked him what had happened.

There was a greater change in his manner than in his countenance, when he laid his hand gently on her shoulder, and in a kindly voice said, “ Poor child ! ”

Then he untied, with tremulous hands, the bright strings of her gaudy bonnet, and gently removed it from her head. She did not know what he was doing. It was her first thought that his mind had given way.

“ Put that aside, Jessie ; you must not wear that any more.”

There was an old straw bonnet, and an older grey shawl, hanging up on a peg against the door. They had belonged to the poor girl in the days of her innocence. She had not worn them for a long time ; but she could not bear to part with them.

Gilbert Arnold took them down.

"Jessie," he said, "put on these." She took them into her hands without asking any questions.

"Wait a minute," he said. Then he poured out some water into a basin, and added, "My poor child, it will not do to enter thus into the house of God."

She did not quite understand what he meant by these last words ; but she seemed in a measure to comprehend his actions, if she did not quite fathom his speech. And she washed away the paint from her face.

"There, that will do," he said. Then, taking the humble straw bonnet into his hands, he placed it gently on her head, and kissed her. Then he laid the old grey shawl on her shoulders, and smiled as he had not smiled for months. "Now come with me, Jessie."

"Where, Gilbert ? I will go with you anywhere ; but what does all this mean ?"

"That I want you to come with me to church."

"To church—oh, yes! I will go with you, Gilbert. But tell me, now—for you look very ill, and seem very weak—have you eaten anything to-day?"

"Nothing, Jessie—I do not want it. Indeed, I do not, dear."

It was heaven to poor Jessie to hear him speak in so kind a voice. She went to a little cupboard that there was in one corner of the room, and took out from it a small plate of meat, and a roll. Then she laid a clean towel on her little table, spread out the humble meal, told Gilbert to seat himself, and before he could utter a remonstrance, had taken a jug from the cupboard, and hastened down stairs.

In a few minutes she returned with some beer procured from a neighbouring tavern. Gilbert had not seated himself. He was walking impatiently up and down the room like a beast in a cage. He was greatly touched by her kindness; but he was in a high state of exciteability and impatience. He was eager to be again in the church, and was jealous of the loss of time.

Jessie placed the beer on the table. "Now, Gilbert, sit down, dearest," she said. "It will do you so much good — I wish that I had something better to give you. But even this will strengthen



and refresh you—I can see how weak you are—it will not take you long."

"But what time is it? It must be church-time."

"No, Gilbert, indeed it is not—none of the church bells have begun to sound. It is not yet six o'clock."

Then Gilbert sate down to the little table; and Jessie put some meat in the plate before him and filled a tumbler with ale. She did not know what was about to happen, but she felt unwontedly happy,

and there was a glimmering of the old joyous and innocent expression on her fair oval face.

Gilbert ate and was refreshed—and then, as Jessie stood beside her chair, he threw his arm around her slender waist, and began to tell her all that had happened to him since the dawn of that eventful day. Jessie's face grew brighter and brighter as she listened to him, and when he had done, she laid her little head upon his shoulder, and wept outright for joy.

They mingled their tears together. They were the first that Gilbert Arnold had shed for years. And in the renewed heart of that degraded man, human love, pure and unselfish, such as it had never known before, found an abiding tabernacle. * *

Then they two together entered the house of God.



SERMON THE THIRD.

I WAS sitting with Mr. Arnold in his study. He had been very feeble of late. Indeed, ever since the death of his beloved daughter he had been sensibly declining. Perhaps to me, who saw him almost every day, his decline was less apparent than to others, but even I could see, from day to day, some slight change for the worse, and it was plain to me that his power of physical resistance was now almost exhausted. He had still the same wonderful moral strength—the same holy fortitude and patience. He had never murmured—he had never doubted for a moment—but the mortal part of him had succumbed to the shock.

It is little for me to say that I never knew so holy-minded a man as Mr. Arnold—one in whom the spirit triumphed so victoriously over the frail flesh. I had not conceived it possible for man to accomplish such a mastery over all the obstacles and hindrances—the downward draggings of our corrupt nature—so utterly and entirely to crucify self and to tread down the old Adam within him. The failure of his fleshly body—his great physical sufferings, for, indeed, he was seldom free from pain, were deplored by him only because they limited his utility to others, and compelled him to forego, in some measure, the privilege of personally ministering to the wants of the poor. He had no longer any pupils in his house. He had, for some time, refused to receive any new students, and as, one by one, the education of the old had been completed, he soon found himself alone in the Rectory. It was his duty, he thought, to give *all* his little remaining strength to his parish; so he ceased from private tuition. He was unwilling to obtain assistance in the pulpit and the reading-desk; and for a long time he did all the duties himself. But

the settlement in his near neighbourhood of an old and dear college friend in holy orders, but of independent means and without a cure, caused him to relax in this determination; and he had not now for some months performed single-handed the whole of the Sabbath duties. Mr. Arnold was one of those who believed that only a small part of the ministerial work was to be done within the walls of the church; and he spent much of his time in the cottages of his poorer neighbours. It was a sore trial to him, therefore, when he found that he was little able to go abroad; for though he threw open the doors of the Rectory, and invited all to enter them who needed his assistance and advice, he felt that their occasional visits to his study were but a poor substitute for his visits to the cottage-parlours of his lowly brethren. It is hard to say how much the aspects of those little parlours had improved since Mr. Arnold and his gentle daughter, with an abundant store always of kind looks and cheering words, and often with more substantial, but scarcely more welcome blessings, had been wont to cast the sunshine of their presence across the thresholds of

those cottage-homes. No one knew better than Mr. Arnold the intimate connexion between household comfort and Christian morality—and no one ever did more to encourage the growth of the former by demonstrating his paternal interest in the welfare of the poor, and teaching them to have respect for themselves. Many a clean and orderly home, with its little plot of well-cultivated garden-ground and its little shelf of books in-doors, owed its existence, where once had been waste and disorder, to the neighbourly visits of the rector of Little Millbrook.

It was a sore trial, therefore, as I have said, to Mr. Arnold, to find his bodily frailty ever constraining the eager efforts of his strong spirit. Now that his children had been taken from him—that one had been translated to Heaven, and the other had died a more dreadful moral death—more than ever had the welfare of his flock become an object of the tenderest solicitude to him ; more than ever did he make the joys and sorrows of his parishioners his own. They were now his beloved children. As for his lost son, the parental heart had not ceased to beat for him.

He had gained no tidings of his boy for months ; he believed that Gilbert, if still alive, was sunk in the lowest depths of degradation. It was all very strange—very perplexing. But still the righteous man prayed fervently—still his faith was not overcast.

I had been very much in Mr. Arnold's society ever since the death of his daughter. It delighted me to think that my companionship was a solace to the good man. I was, perhaps, too, of some little use to him at this time, and, through him, to my poorer neighbours ; for I frequently drove him about the village in a pony-chaise, and enabled him to pay many visits which he could not have attempted, in his feeble state, if he had been compelled to proceed on foot. And I often communicated his wishes to his humble friends, and, sometimes, under his guidance, conferred, from my own abundant means, small benefits upon them. I had become, in fact, almost his deputy ; and we were now talking over a plan for the erection of some new cottages, which my father—who fell readily into all our schemes—had promised to build upon an improved model, for some of the labouring families of

Little Millbrook, when a servant-maid entered, and said that there were two persons in the garden, who desired to see Mr. Arnold.

The good man had but one answer—he was accessible to every one ; he desired that they might be sent in to him.

The girl seemed to hesitate. She said that they were not Millbrook people ; but a man and a woman—strangers, who looked as though they had come a long way.

“ Travellers ! ” said Mr. Arnold—other men would have said *trampers*—“ perhaps, they only want something to help them on their way—food and rest ; let them have what they want, Martha.”

I had risen by this time, and gone to the window and looked out into the garden. I could see from the bay-window of the study the porch of the Rectory-door, and the strangers who were standing before it. They were not at all the kind of people that I had expected to see. They were not ordinary trampers. Travel-stained they were, with a look of poverty and suffering about them ; but they were not like common

beggars. There was something about them that excited a sudden interest within me, and I said that I would go out and speak to them.

I went out.

The man,
hearing the
door open,
raised his
eyes, which
had before
been fixed on
the ground ;
and I knew
them at once.

There was a
peculiar ex-



pression about them which I could not mistake ; and I immediately exclaimed, " Gilbert ! "

Yes ! Gilbert Arnold was standing again before the door of his father's house—how changed, how fallen ; and yet, in one sense, how improved ! I could see at a glance that there was nothing of the old defiant look about him. The reckless, swaggering air was

gone from him altogether. He stood there, as one abashed, irresolute. It was some time before he could speak to me, and then he asked, in a voice thick with emotion, if his father was within.

I answered in the affirmative, but added, that Mr. Arnold was in a very feeble state of health, and that any sudden excitement might be dangerous.

Gilbert staggered forward towards me as though he had been struck, and then, making a great effort to master his emotion, and to speak clearly and intelligibly, he said,

"I know what you mean. It is right that you should say what you do. You think that I have come, as I often have come before, to threaten and to defy him—to vex his noble heart, to force my selfish wants upon him, to clamour for more money. Oh, Sullivan, you do not know—you cannot know—what has been passing within me during the last few days. I am come here—we have come here—this is Jessie Hart—only to fling ourselves at my father's feet, to implore his forgiveness, and then, if God wills it, to die!"

The girl—who had stood, silent and trembling, a

little way apart, now stepped forward, and, turning towards me her wan face, wet with the coursing tears, said to me, in a weak but earnest voice,

“Indeed, sir, we have only come here to be forgiven, and to die.”

It was my turn now to make a great effort to master my emotion—I endeavoured to speak calmly and collectedly—I said that I could see that they were weary—perhaps, hungry and athirst—that they had better come in and rest and refresh themselves, whilst I prepared Mr. Arnold to receive them—that I dreaded the effect of any sudden excitement, even one of great joy, which I knew would be the effect of the recovery of his lost son; but that if I were cautiously to communicate the truth to him, all, I was sure, would be well. So they followed me into the house without speaking a word.

I took them into the dining-room. It was curious and affecting to see how he followed me like a child, and did as I desired him to do—he, who a little time before, would have asked me, haughtily and angrily, why I presumed to dictate to him in his father’s house. That hard spirit was now broken—that ve-

hement nature subdued. Humbly and gratefully he listened to my suggestions, and meekly conformed himself to them. I desired him and his companion to seat themselves, and then I took some wine from the sideboard, and setting it before them, poured it out and persuaded them to drink. If nothing else had before convinced me of the great reformation that had been wrought, I should have known it now; for all his solicitude was for Jessie. He, of old the selfish wine-bibber, would not raise the glass to his lips until he had seen her drink and refresh herself; and when meat and bread were brought and I exhorted them to eat, each pressed the other to accept what I offered, but both seemed regardless of themselves. They were exhausted by much fatigue, and weak from abstinence; but they could hardly be persuaded to touch the viands which were set before them. There was too much emotion within.

Gilbert asked me many questions about his father. I did my best to soften the truth to him. I did not say that I believed he was dying; I merely said that he was very feeble, but that I hoped the recovery of his son, whom he had never ceased to love, and for

whom he had never ceased to pray, would have a restoring and reinvigorating effect upon the old man. It would be necessary, however, I said, that the announcement of Gilbert's return should be made cautiously to him, lest evil should result from the sudden shock; and this I undertook to do, though I felt the difficulty of the task—a difficulty increased by my knowledge of the character of Mr. Arnold. In him the love of truth was so strong, that he would not have tolerated the slightest departure from it, even in the way of a reservation or a half-truth; so that I could not let him gradually into a knowledge of the fact of Gilbert's return, by hinting at its probability, or saying that something had been heard of him. But I managed slowly to prepare him for the reception of the information with which I was laden, and then I told him that Gilbert had returned to throw himself at his father's feet.

The announcement seemed to surprise him less than I thought it would. He told me afterwards that he had never ceased to hope, and that the probability of Gilbert's return had been constantly present to his thoughts. The predominant feeling

in his mind was one not of astonishment, but of thankfulness. His whole soul was steeped in the most fervent gratitude. I could see his face kindling into a sublime expression of adoration, as his lips muttered the one scarcely audible word, "answered." His faith had never been overcast for a moment, and now it had suddenly met with its reward. His prayers had been answered. His son had returned to fling himself at his feet.

A few minutes of inward prayer—of speechless communion with his Maker—and then he turned to me as though he were anxious that I should join him in his thanksgivings. And I did so. We two knelt down together, and never did the incense of praise ascend from the heart of man to the mercy-seat of God with more tranquillising and strengthening influence upon the worshippers.

We rose up, indeed, in calmness and in strength. Mr. Arnold said that he was now prepared to receive his son; and he seated himself in his arm-chair beside the table, with his hand resting on the Bible. I can hardly describe what followed. I know that I brought in Gilbert Arnold in his soiled and tattered clothes,

haggard and travel-stained. I know that in a moment he was at his father's feet—clinging to his knees, bathing them with his tears. I can see even now the trembling hands of the good old man on the wild matted head of his son. I can see his upturned face and his moving lips—but I do not know what was said. The blessing may have been a voiceless one. I saw it; I did not hear it. I heard only Gilbert's sobs. It was long before the penitent would rise. Humbled in spirit, he seemed to find solace in his abject posture at his father's feet.

Then I have a confused recollection of seeing another penitent at the old man's feet—her hands before her face, her long black hair falling over her quivering arms, sobbing as though her heart would break—a Magdalene more sinned against than sinning. And there was a place for Jessie, you may be sure, in the depths of the good man's heart. He gathered them together as his children. I think that he joined their hands. I can see him now, with his hand upon her head, putting back the dark hair from her face, and kissing the poor child upon her white forehead; I can describe it only thus confusedly:

—my own tears fell as plenteously as those of either the prodigal or his victim.

Mr. Arnold persuaded me not to leave them. Gilbert, too, seemed anxious that I should remain that evening at the Rectory. It seemed to them that my presence would be a support to them both. Jessie, too, remained with us. Mr. Arnold would not suffer her to depart. There was no thought more paramount in his mind at that time, than that of making every reparation to the poor child, whom his son had so cruelly injured. He was eager publicly to acknowledge her as Gilbert's intended wife. I do not think that any thought of the disparity of their social condition ever passed across the good man's mind. Indeed, in every respect save those of birth and education—and Gilbert had turned to poor account the advantages which were in his reach—Jessie was immeasurably the superior of the two. In a little time after their arrival at the Rectory, the weary penitents had changed their attire, and effaced all the stains of travel; and it was curious to see how no change of raiment, and no washing of water, could obliterate the signs of the man's degradation; whilst the girl

seemed to recover, almost as by sudden magic, not the freshness of her health and beauty—for she was very pale and languid, with a worn expression of distress about her face—but all that natural propriety and elegance of appearance, which had so struck me before her fall. I had despatched a note to my father's house, and my sister, whose little figure nearly resembled Jessie's, had sent over to the Rectory every article of apparel that the poor girl could require; and such a dainty piece of nature's handiwork was that cottage child, that even her hands and feet slipped readily into the gloves and shoes, on the aristocratic delicacy of which my sister prided herself, and not without reason.

I shall never forget that evening. Mr. Arnold, feeble as he then was, exerted himself, far beyond his powers, to diffuse something of genial warmth and cheerfulness around our little party, and to make us all forget the strangeness of the gathering. He talked on every subject but *the one*—cheered Jessie with pleasing accounts of her family, and anecdotes of their village neighbours; talked about the con-

cerns of the parish ; about what my father was doing, what my sister had done—and, in the fulness of his charity and love, shone amongst us like a saint. To Jessie he was all kindliness and consideration ; for the most part, addressed himself especially to her ; and it was pleasant to see how, in time, under this genial sunshine, the poor blighted flower began to raise her drooping head, and to look around with hopeful assurance. When the tea-tray was brought, the good man playfully desired her to do the honours of the table, and, in spite of her blushing demurrers, made her take the seat before the urn. And very gracefully she did her ministrings. I could not help again thinking of what my fashionable friend had said : “ How easy it would be to make a lady of that girl.”

I took my departure immediately after family-prayers—for Gilbert and Jessie were very weary, and Mr. Arnold was evidently beginning to suffer from the effects of his extraordinary exertions. The following day was Saturday. I took my sister to the Rectory ; and was inexpressibly delighted to see with what true womanly sympathy and kindliness she took

Jessie to her heart, and poured precious balm into the wounds of the poor outcast. Mr. Arnold was very busy during the greater part of the day, in his own study. He was writing his sermon for the Sabbath morning. When he came out of the room, in the middle of the day, to take his early dinner—which was often my luncheon—there was great excitement in his manner, and I could see that his eyes were red with weeping. I was convinced that he had been composing a sermon adapted in some measure to his own domestic circumstances, and I trembled for the result. It was, indeed, a hazardous experiment in his enfeebled and prostrate condition ; and I looked forward to his next appearance in the pulpit with an anxiety approaching to dismay.

It was Mr. Arnold's wish that his son and Jessie Hart should be married with the least possible delay. He had mentioned to me his desire that their bans should be declared in church, and had even stated his intention of reading them out himself. He seemed to wish that the declaration of his son's intention to do tardy justice to poor Jessie, should be publicly made in

the presence of all his parishoners. But I had dissuaded him from a measure, which I thought would be extremely painful to all parties, and which, after all, would anticipate only by a few days—perhaps, only by a few hours—the diffusion of the general knowledge of the coming event. News of this kind travels rapidly in a country village. So Mr. Arnold had departed from his original intention, and consented to obtain a license. But I still felt a strong conviction that the morrow's sermon would contain many allusions to the striking event which had just happened in his family. That evening, after dusk, Jessie visited her mother's cottage; but she slept beneath the Rectory roof.

* * * * *

The Sabbath morning was one of unusual brilliancy for that season of the year. I cannot call to mind a brighter November day. The sun shone brilliantly in an unclouded sky, and though there had been a little frost at dawn, as the day advanced it was mild as spring. Never had the pathway across the Green appeared more crowded than on that morning. It

seemed as though few or none in the village had remained within to watch their homes. Whether it was merely the fineness of the weather, or whether it was because it had been noised abroad that Gilbert Arnold and Jessie Hart had returned, and it was believed that they would appear together in the rector's pew, and that the good old man would, as was his wont, improve the occasion, old and young flocked, in unusual numbers, into the church. It was a rude, primitive structure inside and out, that church of Little Millbrook ; and except my father's pew, which was one of ample dimensions, with high walls, on every side, of curiously-carved oak, there was scarcely one better than the rest ; and they were all confusedly huddled together without any system or arrangement—square pews and oblong pews, high pews and low pews—such a collection as would have filled with utter dismay a modern metropolitan divine. There were few empty seats, however, on this Sabbath morning. I could see, too, that there was much turning of eyes towards the Rectory-pew, but it remained untenanted. I had already taken Gilbert and

Jessie, by a side-door, into my father's pew, the inmates of which were effectually screened from observation; and very much they liked the arrangement, for they dreaded the gazing eyes of the curious, but not unsympathising crowd.

Mr. Arnold did not read the prayers, or the communion-service. The friend, of whom I have spoken, did this for him. He himself had taken his place in the pulpit from the commencement of the service, for it was an effort to him—indeed, he required assistance—to mount the stairs. His face was as pale as marble. It was almost as calm. I could see that he prayed devoutly; and prayer always gave him strength and serenity. But still, when—the service over, and the psalm sung—preparing to commence his sermon, Mr. Arnold poured forth, in a low tremulous voice, the introductory prayer, and then opened the little pocket-Bible, from which he ordinarily read his texts, I could plainly see that he was bracing himself up for a great trial, and that all his heaven-drawn strength would be needed to carry him on securely to the end. Never before or since have I listened to the enuncia-

tion of a text with such breathless interest and anxiety. I had forecast it in my mind—and I was not mistaken ;—

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘ Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ ”

Gilbert Arnold sate in one corner of our capacious family-pew—I sate in another. Between us, sitting side by side, were my sister and Jessie Hart. They were very much of the same size ; and when you did not see their faces, they looked like two sisters. My father, being indisposed, was not at church that day.

Mr. Arnold repeated the text. Twice in a touching voice he uttered those touching words. Then he put aside the little Bible, and spread out before him the black-cased manuscript on the crimson cushion. Mr Arnold composed his sermons, but he often found that he had preached out his discourse with many of the written pages unturned. His heart ran faster than his eyes ; and it often happened that after a little time, through the mist of tears, he saw nothing

but a confused mass of upturned faces. And so, on this Sabbath morning, I scarcely think that he read a page. After the enunciation of the text there was a long pause. Not a face in all the church, save those of Gilbert Arnold and Jessie Hart, that was not now turned full upon the preacher. *They* sate with throbbing hearts and downcast eyes—shaken with strong emotion. My sister laid her little hand on Jessie's, and with a kindly pressure of sympathy and assurance, endeavoured to give her strength. The few first sentences of the sermon were hardly audible. But presently the preacher's words became more distinct, and through the breathless silence his deep, earnest tones swelled into volume and solemnity. Not a syllable now was lost upon that wrapt and excited audience. The subject of the discourse was in itself an old and trite one. Not a Sunday in the year that it is not discoursed upon, in, perhaps, some scores of churches. It is one of the stock-subjects alike of the young curate and the old divine. But no one on this memorable occasion, when he heard the words of the text, composed himself in the corner of

his pew to drowse over a commonplace commentary on the parable of the Prodigal Son. All knew the meaning of the words when uttered by those lips. And then the discourse itself—written down and read quietly by a stranger—there might seem to be little that was remarkable in it. The greater part of it differed, in no great measure, from the best of the sermons written upon this touching but hackneyed theme. Perhaps it might have been observed of it, that the writer dwelt somewhat more earnestly and eloquently than most expositors on the sufferings of the bereaved parent—on his constant prayers for the repentance and recovery of the lost one, and that there was a certain graphic minuteness of detail which stamped a painful reality upon it. But preached as was that sermon by Mr. Arnold, not a word of it that was not clothed with deep and solemn meaning, and that did not go straight to the hearer's heart. What a picture of mental suffering was there laid before us—of the afflicted parent, weary, heavy-laden, praying incessantly for his lost son, and never, though his prayers were unanswered, suffering the light of his

faith to be dimmed, or the earnestness of his importunities to relax for a moment. It is no exaggeration to say that there was not a tearless eye in church. Gilbert sate with his head bowed down between his hands; and I saw afterwards that he had bitten his under-lip until the blood had flowed from the wound. The tears were streaming down Jessie's cheek, and but for the restraining pressure of my sister's hand she would have sobbed aloud. As for myself, I trembled for Mr. Arnold. I saw that he was exhausting his strength—that the excitement and the exertion together were more than he could bear; and others, who heard him on this day, told me afterwards that they thought, as I did, that this sermon would be his last.

But he went on for more than half an hour, dwelling with minute and painful fidelity on all the circumstantial sufferings both of the father and the son. It was a picture—beautifully and touchingly drawn—of his own and Gilbert's sufferings; and as the voice of the speaker grew lower and lower, but not less distinct, his face and figure seemed to fade and dwindle

before one's eyes ; there was something ghostly about his aspect, and his words thrilled through the souls of his hearers, as though they were syllabled by the voice of the dead. But when he came to speak of the return of the lost one (he had long ceased, by this time, to turn over the pages of his written discourse), his voice rose into a rich swell of rapture, and a sudden glow suffused itself over his pale face. I saw then that the crisis was approaching.

And as the holy man went on to describe the ecstatic joy, and the profound thankfulness of the father, whose prayers had been thus unexpectedly answered, his eyes seemed suddenly to ignite, and sparkle with unearthly brilliancy, and his whole figure to expand as with the swellings of gratitude and joy. He had been interlacing with his own words the simple language of the parable—his discourse, indeed, was a running commentary upon it. And now he had come to that passage which tells how the father ordered his servants to bring forth the best robe and the fatted calf. “ But the father said to his servants, ‘ Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and

put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat and be merry. For . . . ' " here Mr Arnold paused ; then, with upturned face, and hands stretched out—as in attitude of blessing—towards the pew in which sate Gilbert Arnold, continued, ' For this my son was dead, and is alive again : was lost, and is found. ' "

He tried to go on ; but it was plain that the over-strung chord had snapped. The crisis had come. He looked vaguely around, as though his brain were reeling under a sudden shock, and as every one in church held his breath with painful anxiety, raised his hands to heaven as though in answer to a summons from above, and with something of rapture in his tremulous voice faltered out the ecstatic words, " Even so—come, Lord Jesus, " and fell forward upon the pulpit-cushion, as though the good man had died at his work.

They were the last words he was ever heard to speak. There was a pause—a minute of silence and inactivity—to all in our pew, a minute of inexpressible painfulness, and then a rustling of feet, as though

more than one person was about to proceed to the good man's aid. I had myself moved to the door of the pew. But Mr. Arnold raised himself a little—his face was once more visible to his congregation. His lips moved. He was evidently trying to pronounce the blessing. Not a syllable was audible ; but the form had been gone through. The preacher again bowed his head, and it was hoped by his loving parishioners, who noiselessly and silently moved from their seats, each turning, as he went, an anxious look towards the pulpit, that their venerated pastor was only suffering from weakness and exhaustion. But I had far other fears. The village doctor had remained in his pew, thinking that he might be needed. I beckoned him to me. We went up to the pulpit-stairs together, and carried him down into the body of the church. There was little or no volition in his limbs. I can see now the horrified faces of Gilbert, Jessie, and my sister, as they stood at the open door of the pew. It was plain that there was no time to be lost. I motioned to the clerk to open the door nearest to the gate which led into my father's garden.

We carried the dying man through it, and in a minute we had laid him upon a sofa in my father's library. But we only carried him a corpse into the room. He must have died as we passed through the garden.



SERMON THE FOURTH.

It rained incessantly on the day of the funeral. But the churchyard was crowded with bareheaded mourners, weeping for the loss of a common parent. I have never seen so much genuine sorrow. It was no idle curiosity that brought even the children to the good man's grave.

The service was performed by the generous friend who had so often lightened Mr. Arnold's ministerial duties. It was obviously a sore trial to him to keep down the imperious emotion which dimmed his eyes and choked his utterance, and but for a great effort of the will, would have mastered him outright. Gilbert was, of course, chief mourner. What he had

suffered since his father's death, though none knew so well as myself the depths of anguish into which he had been plunged, I shall not endeavour to describe. It were hard to say how altered he was. The outer change assorted with the inner. You would hardly have known him when you looked into his face. It was thinner—paler—more spiritual. Every feature was sharpened and refined, and the expression of his countenance purified and subdued. He had lost the *bad look* which low debauchery had stamped upon his bloated face; and you might have taken him for one who had just risen from a bed of mortal sickness—enfeebled and attenuated by physical pain. He did not now shed a tear or betray a sign of emotion, but his rigid, ghastly face told more significantly what the inward conflict had been. He was as one who had grieved himself to stone.

When the service was over, he walked silently to the parsonage, and saw no one during the remainder of the day. In the evening, Jessie Hart tapped at his door and besought him to take some light refreshment, which she had brought with her. He

answered her very kindly; bade God bless her; but said that he wanted nothing. How he spent the night I never knew.

But on the morrow he came down stairs at the usual time, and summoned the household to family worship. Jessie Hart had remained at the parsonage, and it had been arranged that her mother should take up her abode there for a time. When Gilbert appeared among them again, it seemed as if new feelings had risen up within him, and that he had been cheered by some unknown hope, or some unexpected promise. His features had lost much of the rigidity of the preceding day. It was no longer a face of marble, but one susceptible of the expression of varied emotion. I happened to enter the house just as the party were assembling for prayers, and I joined them in their devotions. Gilbert read the lesson and the prayer, slowly and solemnly, and with something of his father's manner. I had never observed any likeness between them before.

But a new trouble was now beginning to overshadow that little household. When I shook hands

that morning with Jessie Hart, and inquired after her health, I observed something very peculiar in her face. She had been suffering throughout the week from the ordinary effects of weariness and exhaustion, and neither the extreme pallor of her cheeks, nor the languid expression of her countenance, had made us apprehensive of the existence of any evil which bodily rest and mental serenity would not speedily allay. But now I saw that she was much changed. The clear pale complexion was gone, and in its place was a thick, muddy look which contrasted strangely with the transparency I had before observed. Her eyes sparkled with more than their wonted brilliancy, but there was a dark ring around the eyelids, so strongly defined that it was noticeable from a considerable distance, and was, indeed, the first thing that struck me on entering the room. Altogether, she was greatly changed; and when I took her little hand into mine, I felt that it was dry and hot; it was the hand of one fever-stricken.

When we rose up from our prayers, I spoke to Jessie again. I said that I was afraid she was still

very poorly. She answered that she had been suffering greatly from headache and pain in the back ; she thought that she was feverish ; there was much nausea and thirst ; perhaps, she had caught a severe cold, and had over-exerted herself. Doubtless, she would soon be better.

But I thought differently ; and before returning to my father's house I called on the village doctor, and asked him to look in at the Rectory with the least possible delay. He set out immediately — found Jessie Hart in a high state of feverish excitement, which he naturally attributed to the sufferings, mental and bodily, which she had recently undergone ; desired her to remain very quietly in her own room ; gave some instructions to Mrs. Hart, and sent the poor girl some cooling medicines. But during the day the fever increased ; the pains increased ; the nausea increased. She passed an uneasy night, but occasionally fell into a drowse, which continued, at intervals, during the following day. Gilbert and Mrs. Hart were continually in her room, watching beside her with anxiety and alarm. In the gloomy

twilight of the winter afternoon the former sate by her bed-side holding her parched hand, and now and then grasping the little fingers, which returned a sympathetic pressure, when the sufferer said suddenly to him, "Gilbert, dearest, put your hand on my forehead—I do not know what is the matter with me—I think I must be very ill."

As she said this she took Gilbert's hand and placed it on her brow. He could see nothing through the twilight, but he could feel that an eruption was coming out thickly on her forehead and on her face. He asked Mrs. Hart to bring a candle, but before she returned, the truth had flashed appallingly upon him. Jessie Hart was in the first stage of the small-pox.

When the doctor paid his evening visit he confirmed Gilbert's suspicions. He might have before suspected the truth, but the small-pox was a stranger in Little Millbrook. Not a single case had been known there for many years. Indeed, so little heed was given to the existence of this fearful disease, that Mrs. Hart, in common with the greater number of the villagers, had neglected to protect her children

against it. Not one of them had been vaccinated. She forgot that, though born and reared in Millbrook, they might not end their days there. Jessie had doubtless inhaled the insidious poison in the streets of London, and it had been slowly diffusing itself through her veins ever since her return to her native village.

Mrs. Hart, who was the daughter of a small tradesman in the county town, had taken the small-pox, in the natural way, a few years before her marriage, and was now able, therefore, to nurse her daughter without any fear of contagious results. Gilbert had been vaccinated as an infant; but the doctor pronounced his continuance in the sick-chamber to be dangerous, and Mrs. Hart implored him not to enter it again. But his resolution had been taken from the first. If his presence were a solace to Jessie—and who can say how great a solace it was? nothing should deprive her of it. Was it, or was it not, a proof of Jessie's affection that she did not *ask* him to avoid her? Love wears so many different faces, that I cannot venture to decide.

At all events, the poor girl felt and declared that Gilbert's presence alone made her sufferings endurable. All through the dark night of his selfishness and unworthiness she had dearly loved him, and now, in the brighter hour of reparation, he shone before her almost as a god. His presence seemed to illumine the sick-chamber; and even when she could not see him, and dare not touch him, she lay for hour after hour, happy in the thought that he was there.

I scarcely know how to analyse Gilbert's feelings. Perhaps, if I were to attempt it, the investigation would be of too subtle and delicate a character to be very acceptable to the reader. The strongest emanations of human love are often those which set duty at defiance. When we love simply for love's sake—not because we have any requirements of duty to satisfy, or any obligations to fulfil, but because we cannot help loving, and, in our helplessness, must needs cast all other considerations to the winds—though we may manifest the weakness of our fallen nature, we at all events confess the might and majesty of human affection; and there is something, perhaps,

not wholly degrading in a genuine though misdirected attachment, smiled on by neither God nor Man. I do not know that this remark is much called for by the circumstances of the case before me. I merely purposed to remark that the feeling with which Gilbert Arnold regarded Jessie Hart at this time, was not a purely personal feeling. He did not sit, hour after hour, as men have done, in the tainted chamber, solely because it was a delight to him to be near her—in sickness or in health, in beauty or deformity; because no danger could neutralise the joy of her presence, and no disease impair her loveliness in his eyes. His heart was softened; and he looked back with wondering self-condemnation on the early days of his acquaintance with Jessie Hart, calling to mind her manifold attractions, and reproaching his bad heart for not having loved her better than himself; and though he shuddered when he thought of the gulf of fire through which she had been dragged, and, with a spasm of indignation, laid his hand menacingly on his own throat, when he thought that *he* had dragged her through it; and though he looked into

the future, not without joy at the thought of being attended through life by a partner so gentle, so loving, and so lovely, there was an overbearing sense of the duty of reparation—a sense of his duty towards an offended God, and of the last wishes of a sainted parent—which destroyed the pure personality of the human love, but made up what ought, perhaps, to be esteemed as a compound feeling of a far higher order.

At all events, there sate Gilbert Arnold, hour after hour, day after day, beside the sick-bed of Jessie Hart. He seldom left her chamber, save when desired to do so, for a little space, by the mother of the sick girl. Men are not very good nurses at best, and Gilbert Arnold was but little accustomed to ministrations of this kind; but very gentle, and very tender, and very vigilant he was, and Jessie loved to receive her medicines from his hand. There was much in all this that was indescribably painful to him. The disease took the worst form of confluent small-pox. After some days, it had made such progress that the poor child could see nothing that was placed before

her, and she could not articulate her wants. It was hard to interpret the inarticulate sounds which she uttered, or to read aright the signs which she made. How he tried to understand her no words can tell; and yet it was often long before, for want of understanding, he could relieve her wants. At times, too, it was plain that she was delirious; the fever ran very high; she would start up from her bed, throw about her arms, and utter strange incoherent words which he could not comprehend.

And to see the rapid disfigurement of that fair little face! Soon there was not a trace of Jessie Hart's identity left. In the fearfully swollen and darkened face—one mass of dreadful prurulence—in the closed eyes and the tumid lips, no mother could have recognised the features of her child. What an illustration of the great truth, that “beauty is deceitful, and favor is vain.” A few days, and that which had been so comely and pleasant to see, had become something terrible to look upon. It seemed impossible that a face so transformed should ever return to its former state. There are those who, questioning the possibi-

lity, would have seen in the prospect before them only another means of testifying the strength and sincerity of their *love*. Gilbert Arnold saw in it another means of testifying the strength and sincerity of his *repentance*. He did not solace himself with the thought that in this disfigured tabernacle the loving heart—ever the charm of charms—was still fresh and unspotted. But he thought that if it pleased God utterly to deprive the poor girl of the beauty which had first attracted him, the reparation involved in an after-life of assiduous kindness and care, would be the more perfect in its unselfishness. Other feelings afterwards grew stronger in his heart ; but now the dominant thought was that of a great atonement.

Through many a weary day and painful night sate Gilbert Arnold beside the sick-bed of Jessie Hart. The mother, too, watched by the child, and was assiduous in her more experienced ministrations. The doctor tried to speak hopefully of the case ; but it was plain that he had little confidence in its favorable termination, and he confessed that he could do

little—human skill, indeed, could do little—to mitigate the symptoms of the complaint. He said that the disease must “run its course.” Nature alone could effect a cure.

There was a struggle, indeed, between life and death. And oh! how fervently Gilbert Arnold prayed for the mastery of the former. He sat there with the Bible resting on his knees. He had often read brief passages to the suffering girl, and he could see—for even across that swollen disfigured face gleams of expression ever and anon would flit—that they were a solace and a delight to her. But now it seemed that everything was unintelligible. She gave no sign of recognition; but continued, in a kind of delirious sleep, to mutter disjointed sentences, which, from her swollen lips, seldom came forth in articulate words. Gilbert, however, thought at one time that he could catch the words “Many—many . . .”

He had himself been thinking of those fearful words, “many stripes,” and had been earnestly longing to know what was the state of poor Jessie’s mind in this dread crisis, standing, as she was, on the very

margin of the dark waters of the Eternal Sea. He had prayed that she might not pass away without giving some sign. Now he bent over her, careless of everything else, so that he could but catch some cheering intimation of the dying girl's state of mind. Her hot infectious breath was on his cheek—her lips almost touched his own. She was still muttering, "Many, many," and he caught the concluding word.

And a gleam of joy shot into his heart, for he heard her say, "Many—*mansions* . . ."

* * * * *

I have already lingered long enough in the sick-chamber. The prayers of Gilbert Arnold were not lifted up in vain. The Almighty goodness spared the life of Jessie Hart—but she was never suffered again to see the kind smiles of the man she loved.

She rose up from the bed of sickness stone-blind. I brought down a celebrated oculist to see her—but the case was a hopeless one.

* * * * *

And now what was to be done? With a true woman's generosity, Jessie Hart determined to absolve

Gilbert Arnold from his promise. She never had been fit to be his wife, she said; and now it would be cruel, indeed, to impose upon him such a burden. My sister was sitting with the poor blind girl in the drawing-room of the parsonage. It was on the afternoon of Christmas day, and she had been telling Jessie of what we had been doing, at my father's house, to help our poorer neighbours to share with us the festivities of this happy season. It was with a heavy heart that on that day, after morning service, we had welcomed our poorer neighbours, and presided over the substantial meal of good English fare, which we had been accustomed, ever since our occupancy of Freshford, to bestow on all who needed it; for we missed from his accustomed place the good rector of Little Millbrook. And his gentle daughter, who then and there had been wont to return, with some alight but welcome additions, the weekly savings of the poor, and to distribute among them a not contemptible supply of warm winter clothing, had also, since the last anniversary, been translated to another and a happier sphere. We all felt their spiritual

presence amongst us ; but how we grieved not to see them in the flesh.

My sister was telling Jessie of these things. She had seated herself on a low ottoman at the feet of the blind girl, and was caressing her little hands. Jessie had long been yearning to open out her heart to her friend, and now the flood-gates were loosened, and she began :

“ I need not tell you, Miss Earle——”

“ Call me Madeline, please, Jessie.”

“ I need not say what it will cost me to give up that which has been, for some time, the hope of my life. I have often thought that, in course of time, I might make myself worthy of him. I might have tried, at least, to improve myself—I might have read the books he pointed out to me, and listened to what other people said, and observed what other people did ; and though I could never make myself a lady like you, Madeline, I thought that, if I were very careful, I might not disgrace him much. At all events, I knew that I could always be a very diligent and attentive wife, and that though he could never be

proud of one so humble—so fallen—he might find me perhaps more useful, more devoted to him, than one in a higher rank. But now what can I do? Instead of waiting on him always, reading his every want in his face, I am more helpless than a child—I want waiting on myself. I can only be a burden to him—and then to give myself to him so . . .” She faltered here; there had been a question long in her heart which she had not ventured to ask. It had constantly recurred to her mind, and it had disquieted her greatly. She had more than once, indeed, been on the point of shaping it into words, but some feeling of alarm or reserve had always kept it back; and up to this time it was unspoken. “So changed,” she was going to say, “so disfigured,” for she had always dreaded the worst; but she paused, and asked the long-deferred question, “Has it altered me so very much?”

“You mean are you much marked, my dear.”

“Yes; it is very vain and very foolish for me to think anything about it. Indeed, I only did think

about it for his sake, and now that I've made up my mind"

But here my sister interrupted her. "You foolish little thing, you have not made up your mind, and as to your poor face, my dear, it will soon be very much like what it was before your illness. I do not think you will be marked at all. Perhaps we shall have to cut off your hair, for it is coming out very fast—but that will soon grow again; and you may depend upon it, my poor child, that Gilbert Arnold will not very readily suffer you to reject him if you *have* 'made up your mind.'"

And my sister was right. At this very time Gilbert Arnold and I were walking together in my father's Park, talking over his future plans. Mr. Arnold had insured his life, just before his marriage, for 3000*l.*, and, with the exception of a small sum which he owed to my father—it had been advanced for Gilbert's Australian outfit—there was nothing owing by the estate. This money, the furniture in the Rectory, and the valuable, though not very ex-

tensive library, were now all Gilbert's; and though as a provision for his future days this was a scanty pittance, to one who was determined to live a life of useful labour it might be very serviceable in assisting his professional efforts, whatever direction they might take. And what direction were they likely to take? He was in no frame of mind to desire again to concern himself with the trickeries of the law. His uncle, there was reason to suppose, would now have received him again—but Gilbert was stirred by far other thoughts. He was bent upon preparing himself for the ministry. He did not presume to say that he was fitted for so solemn a trust; but he hoped he might become so in time. He would, at all events, endeavour to prepare himself, by much study and self-discipline and prayer, for the holy office. He would not, if he could, he said, have taken, with sudden rashness, upon himself such sacred responsibilities; but he believed that the devotion of his life to the service of his Maker would not be less acceptable for the tribulation he had gone through—he did not think he should ever relapse into his old evil

ways, but time alone could determine this; he would, therefore, he said, endeavour to enter the ministry by no shorter road than that bounded by the ordinary formalities of the university; and when the three years of probation were at an end, his own heart would tell him whether he were fit to undertake the office.

Then he went on to speak about Jessie :

“ My course here,” he said, “ I think is plain. If inclination did not prompt me to marry the poor girl at once, I should still not hesitate for a moment. I am under the most solemn obligation to atone, as far as I can, for my past wickedness, and, moreover, there is ever present to my mind the thought that this was the last wish of my now sainted father. I know that from his dwelling-place among the blest he will look down with angelic delight upon my union with the poor girl, and that, had he lived, her present helplessness would have been urged by him as the strongest of all reasons for my taking upon myself the office of her protector. And, indeed, I feel this myself. But in truth, Sul-

livan, it is no longer a question of duty. It is wholly one of inclination. I would not yield for the world the blessed privilege of protecting that poor helpless child all along the troubled journey of life. My heart yearns towards her with inexpressible tenderness. I see now what she is—what she is capable of being. Every day seems to unfold some new grace. I love her now as I have never loved her before; and it were hard to say, Sullivan, with what delight I look forward to the time when it will be mine, and mine only, to be literally ‘the light of her eyes,’ and to supply by my unfailing kindness and attention the loss with which it had pleased God to afflict her.”

And in this he spoke the truth with all sincerity. It seemed so holy and beautiful a thing to protect and cherish one so helpless and forlorn.

A few weeks after this conversation, Gilbert Arnold and Jessie Hart were married in the church of Little Millbrook, by the same kind friend who had performed the service over the good Mr. Arnold’s remains, and had ever since done the duties of the parish. I shall speak of this matter presently. The

marriage was a very quiet one. It was known throughout the village, that in no more acceptable manner could the respect of the people for the family of their late rector be evinced, than by their forbearance from the manifestation of any idle curiosity ; and so the church and the churchyard were both empty when our little party passed in. My sister, Mrs. Hart, and myself, were the only spectators of the ceremony. I do not think that I have ever been more affected. Even if I had not been acquainted with all the antecedent circumstances which now at last had brought those two together at the altar, there would still have been something inexpressibly touching in the sight of the blind bride, who now stood there pledging her troth to love, honor, and obey one whom it was never again to be permitted her to see. Gilbert uttered the responses with a solemn distinctness ; and my sister remarked to me afterwards, what I had myself observed, that he emphasised the word “cherish,” and with still deeper meaning pronounced that passage of the vow which bound him to be true to her “in sickness or in

health," looking down with ineffable tenderness on the frail, helpless creature, whose soft little hand he held in his own.

We all returned together to the Parsonage. Gilbert was in very good spirits—happier than he had been since his father's death, and there was an expression of angelic contentment in Jessie's face which made her quite beautiful. The dreadful disease which had deprived her of her eyesight, had left behind it no other mark of its destroying power on her fair round face ; and nothing could have looked prettier, in that simple robe of white, than the delicate little figure which it covered. Any one might have been proud of such a wife.

* * * * *

Of course, the marriage was much canvassed in Little Millbrook. People were not so fond of talking about the affairs of their neighbours as they had been before the advent of good Mr. Arnold ; but gossip was not dead in the village, and if it had been, this would have been a grand occasion for its resurrection. There were one or two ill-natured people, who said

that some folks were more fortunate than others, and were rewarded for doing wrong—that it was a very bad example to other girls to see Jessie Hart made a lady. But when better-disposed people laid their fingers significantly on their eyelids, and spoke of what she had suffered, the malignants tacitly admitted that she had been sufficiently punished; and some very obdurate objectors were silenced by the intimation that it was the last wish of the good rector, who had been carried up to heaven.

And when they all came to see how meekly Jessie bore her new honors—how glad she was to hear the voices of her old friends, and, if possible, to aid them—when they saw how patient and resigned she was, and knew that she never spoke of the happiness she derived from the unfailing tenderness of her husband, and the kindness of my gentle sister, without saying how much more it was than she deserved, and that if God had taken away her eyesight, and raised her up no kind friends, it would have been a fitting punishment for all the evil she had done; they came, in time, to regard her with a common feeling of pity and

affection, and there were no more spiteful allusions to the past.

Some weeks after the marriage, Gilbert took his wife up to London, in the vain hope that another celebrated oculist could do what his cotemporary had declared impossible. But the result was not more encouraging. As they returned to their hotel, and Jessie heard the loud clattering of the carriage in which she sat, and the buzz of the eager multitude passing to and fro, she laid her head on Gilbert's shoulder, and whispered that she now for the first time was glad that she could not see. She had prayed, she said, before her illness, that she might never see the London streets again.

She longed, indeed, to return to the country. Gilbert had some long-standing bills to pay, and there were a few old companions from whom he had borrowed small sums of money, and whom it now gave him some trouble to find ; but he was determined not to leave London until he had paid all to the uttermost farthing. And there was one vast debt which he was more eager to pay than all—the mighty debt of gra-

titude which he owed to the preacher of that sermon which had awakened the new life within him. He took Jessie with him to the good man's house, and he told him the history of their lives. Friendships established on such a foundation as this do not wear out in a day.

Gilbert entered himself at Cambridge, and soon afterwards went there to reside, establishing his poor little wife in some pretty lodgings in the outskirts of the town. She had not been there long, before I called upon her one day unexpectedly, with some pleasant tidings. Gilbert was in college, and I was glad of it, for I wished Jessie to communicate the good news to her husband. It related to the living of Little Millbrook. The advowson belonged to the old proprietors of Freshford, but they had not parted with it when my father bought the estate. It was believed that they were retaining it in their hands for the benefit of a youthful member of the family, after Mr. Arnold's death. But the youth had peremptorily declared his unwillingness to enter the Church, and now the advowson was to be sold. My father had

always been anxious to purchase it, for the living had been, from time immemorial, in the gift of the proprietors of Freshford ; and now he was more anxious than ever. The purchase, therefore, was soon completed ; and my father, after a long conversation with my sister and myself on the subject, had determined to confer the living eventually on Gilbert Arnold, if at the time of his ordination he should appear to us—as we little doubted—a fit person to take charge of the spiritual welfare of our beloved village. In the meanwhile, Mr. Arnold's old friend, of whom mention has more than once been made, consented to occupy the Rectory (with an especial stipulation on his part that Gilbert and his wife should spend the vacations there), and do all the parochial duties. He was so kind and generous a man that he would have spent the whole of the stipend among the poor of the parish, if I had not hinted to him that such a course might be hardly fair to those who came after him with scantier means at their disposal. I do not know that I was right.

These were, indeed, glad tidings to Jessie Arnold.

Tears of gratitude and joy filled her sightless eyes as she thanked me again and again, and spoke of the delight which such great news would impart to her dear husband. And she told me afterwards, with something of an apology, that she was afraid that she was selfish enough to delight in the prospect before her almost as much on her own as on Gilbert's account.

"For," she said, "I know the Rectory so well—I know all the rooms in it, the very chairs and tables, and how the garden looks from the windows, and the church, and the village, and all the walks around—and I know the voices of the people too, and they are kind to me—kinder than I deserve; and I shall hardly miss my sight there, as I do in strange places, where I am always wondering what the things are like, and am troubled by unfamiliar voices, and feel no confidence in people whose faces I do not know."

It made me very happy to think of the delight with which, at their next meeting, the glad tidings would be given and received; but I would not have broken in upon it for the world. I heard of it next morning,

when I breakfasted with them, and Gilbert was assured, from my own lips, that his little wife had told the whole story aright.

I could see how happy they were in one another; and Gilbert told me afterwards, as we walked to the university together, that he had not overrated, in anticipation, the pleasure of ministering to the wants of one so helpless and so grateful; but he regretted much the necessity of being so often away from her. He added, however, that he had found occupation for her in his absence. She had a strong natural taste for music—a fine ear and a beautiful voice. Gilbert had purchased a harp, and obtained the services of an accomplished music-mistress, who was deeply interested in her blind pupil. And so in Gilbert's absence Jessie Arnold found solace in this new delight.

* * * * *

I must pass over these years of university life. Gilbert Arnold took his degree; was ordained; and was presented with the living of Little Millbrook. I shall never forget the day on which he preached his

first sermon from that pulpit, which had been so long the seat of his father's ministrations. It was Easter Sunday, a bright morning in April. I had never seen so many people filing into the church since that memorable morning when old Mr. Arnold preached his last sermon and died. They seemed all to be unwontedly well dressed. Country folks deem it be-



coming to wear something new upon Easter-day, and this was something more than a common Easter-day, for they were to welcome their new rector. It was altogether a very cheerful scene; and I could see some faces in the church, which I do not think had

been there for years, and some, too, which I had never seen before.

The Liturgy was read by the old incumbent. Gilbert did not even appear at the Communion-table, but sate in his own pew with Jessie until it was time for him to ascend the pulpit. He was anxious, he told me, that nothing should precede his first address to his flock—indeed, he thought that he would not be justified in performing any ministerial offices until he had made confession of his unworthiness, and sought their charitable forbearance. So the first words publicly uttered by him in the church were spoken from the pulpit—the opening words of the propitiatory prayer, which was delivered in a low hoarse voice—the voice of one who was making a mighty effort to keep down a great emotion. He was very pale, and his hands trembled as he laid his written discourse on the cushion before him. But he gave out the text with great distinctness—not a word of it was lost. “*What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he*

*said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple.”**

I cannot set down, in orderly arrangement, the heads of Gilbert's inaugural discourse. I only know that it deeply affected every one who was present, and will not be forgotten even by the youngest member of the congregation. It was a discourse ostensibly on the cleansing power—the atoning efficacy of Christ's blood—and it went to show how even the greatest of sinners might wash their robes, though red as scarlet, and draw them forth white as snow—how, bathing himself in Jordan, the foulest leper might return to the river-bank with flesh as a little child's; it spoke of the great tribulation, of the godly sorrow which worketh repentance—of the suffering which brings sinners to the foot of the cross; and of how those love most, of whom most is forgiven, and therefore are most eager to serve God day and

* Revelation, vii.—13, 14, 15.

night in the temple. It showed that from the priesthood of a religion, of which the propitiation for sin is the great fundamental truth, sin for which the propitiation had been offered and accepted, could never rightfully exclude—that he stood there before them as a sinner, but a sufferer too; as one who had come through great tribulation, and who now, loving much, because much forgiven, sought to devote himself, in humble gratitude, to the lifelong service of his glorified Redeemer. He spoke of God's goodness to sinners, of "whom I am chief—of whom I am chief," he repeated, with a touching earnestness of manner, the pathos of which went straight to every heart; and said, though he hoped to merit their respect and affection by his present worthiness, he never wished them to forget what he had once been. Such recollections would afford them many pregnant lessons of faith, of hope, and of charity, and teach him humility and forbearance. Then, turning from the personal application of the discourse, he deduced from his text much which referred with peculiar force to the festival which they were then celebrating. He

spoke of the death and burial, and of the glorified resurrection of our Redeemer, and then of the "death unto sin, and the new birth unto righteousness," which these great events so solemnly prefigured. He spoke of the descent into hell, and the rising again from the dead, thenceforth to be invested with garments of light undimmed, and purity unspotted, in the mansions of the blest. He quoted the words forming part of the Easter anthem, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive;" and showed how especially, at that Easter season, when they were celebrating the Resurrection, by which the gates of everlasting life had been opened, it behoved us to repent us of our past sins, and, "like as Christ was raised from the dead," even so to "walk in newness of life;" and thus blending together these two great features of his discourse—its application to his own individual history, and to the solemn occasion which we were celebrating—he pointed out the peculiar propriety of his first appearance before them on Easter-day, and expressed a hope that, as in the language of the collect of the day, the special grace

of God had "put into his heart new desires," so by God's "continual help he might bring the same to good effect."

And the hope expressed—the promise given — in this discourse was amply fulfilled. Gilbert Arnold began at once to tread in the footsteps of his sainted father. What he had learnt—what he had seen—in his early days had not been thrown away upon him. Religious education is never thrown away. The good seed may be overlaid for a time by hard stones and thick mire, and it may seem to have been sown in vain ; but, sooner or later, the day will come when it will begin to germinate ; and however unpromising the signs may be, we may always assure ourselves that no man, who has been trained in the way he should go, is ever the same as though he had never been subjected to that good training. Assuredly Gilbert Arnold was not. Much that he had seen, much that he had heard in his younger days, now came back upon him with exceeding force and impressiveness ; and he went about his work as one well accustomed to it. He had many obstacles to surmount, but they *were* surmounted.

Among some of the older and least charitable of his parishioners he was at first received with coldness and mistrust ; but this in time wore away, and the younger members of the congregation did not respect him less, because he understood them better, than one who had not like passions, and had not yielded to like temptations with themselves. In all his dealings, alike with the old and the young, there was nothing more apparent than his profound humility ; and as he was very humble, so also was he the kindest and most charitable of men. The poor unburdened themselves freely to him, for they were sure of his ready sympathy and his advice.

As for Jessie Arnold—the good rector's blind wife—she soon became the idol of the village. Perhaps it would not have been so, if her helplessness had not endeared her to them. People are naturally envious of those who are raised from their own ranks and set above them ; but Jessie raised herself above no one ; she was so gentle and unassuming ; she bore her honors as meekly as she bore her misfortunes, and was continually doing some kind thing to her com-

panions of former days. There was seldom a day on which she was not to be seen leaning on her husband's arm, and entering some of the old cottage-homes with which she had been familiar in her childhood. The old people blessed her as she crossed their thresholds, and the young children stole up noiselessly to her, and slid their little hands into hers.

She had children of her own, too, in time; and then she began again to long for the precious gift of which God had deprived her—but her longings were only for a little space; and she smiled when she passed her hands over the tiny faces of her babes, and said that, after all, they might not be as lovely as her fancy pictured them. But people told her—and very truly—that they were lovely, and like herself; and their childish prattle was all the sweeter to her because she could not see their innocent smiles.

But much as she delighted in her babes, she never suffered them to engross so much of her time, or to absorb so wholly her affections, as to render her forgetful of the claims of the “little ones” whom her Master had committed to her care—the poor, the suf-

fering, and the ignorant. She did her best among them, with all earnestness and in all humility. Cheerful was she ; but sometimes there seemed to be a touch of sadness even in her cheerfulness, as though the memory of a painful past were throwing a transient shadow over the broad surface of a serene and sunny present ; and then she would whisper to herself—or if haply a tale of sin and sorrow, heard in some lowly home, had brought the passing cloudlet to her brow, would say aloud, as one who applied the touching words of promise not less to herself than to others—“ *A broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise.*”







